

Extension 'Cord

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CONNECTING PEOPLE, RESOURCES, & KNOWLEDGE

"Welcome to the Extension 'Cord, a monthly briefing paper from WSU Snohomish County Extension. Even though we have existed for over 100 years, we have realized that too many people are unaware of the diversity and impact of our programs. Each issue will highlight the purpose, activities and results of one particular program. The 'Cord will showcase the work of our 1,000 volunteers and 25 staff. Please do not hesitate to contact any of our staff for more information."

Curt Moulton, Extension Director



WSU Snohomish County Growing Groceries Program: Building the Capacity of Communities and Families to Grow Healthy Food

The increasing homelessness and rising unemployment ("Almost 40,000 People out of Work in Sno County" <http://www.redcounty.com/unemployment-snohomish-county-hits-record-highs>) has resulted in increasing numbers of people seeking food at food banks. There was a sharp rise in calls to the WSU Snohomish County Extension office from both families and groups wanting to grow gardens for their own use or to donate fresh produce to the food banks. In response to this need, Sharon Collman and Bick Hang, organized the WSU Snohomish County Growing Groceries Project to build the capacity of families and communities to grow healthy food.



We assembled a team from our WSU Snohomish County Extension office: Bick Hang, Healthy Families; Sharon Collman, Horticulture; Jana Ferris, 4-H youth and adult development; and the WSU Snohomish County Master Gardeners.

We involved other community organizations that already have some food garden expertise and connections to community needs. Organizational support came from the Snohomish County Human Services Department and County Executives office.

We organized:

- WSU Snohomish County Growing Groceries Volunteer Mentor Training workshop series (10 months)
- 190 people attended the WSU Growing Groceries Garden Expo (Everett, 1/30/2009)
- Existing WSU Snohomish County Extension Master Gardener Demo Gardens to focus more on growing food
- Growing Groceries Community Coordinator's Forum (Everett, 6/11/2009)
- WSU Growing Groceries Community Conference (Marysville, 10/10/2009)

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For upcoming events:

<http://snohomish.wsu.edu/calendar.htm>



Outcomes

- 44 mentors completed the training and taught community classes or organized gardens
- Established 11 new community gardens in Everett, Mukilteo, Stanwood, Lynnwood, Lowell, & Snohomish
- 70 classes were taught by about 30 mentors and others on garden topics
- 799 interested novice gardeners attended those classes
- Growing Groceries website was developed
- 40 fact sheets on all aspects of gardening are now available on the web
<http://snohomish.wsu.edu/garfact.htm>
- \$10,000 was set aside by the Snohomish County Master Gardener Foundation for start-up grants to new gardens
- Created the “Growing Groceries with Families” pilot project to reach low income ECEAP families. (Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program) Expansion planned in 2010
 - o mentored families to grow their own produce in the family school garden
 - o facilitated garden/nutrition education with cooking demos
 - o created labels/signage in Spanish and English
 - o families used new knowledge and skills to replicate gardens in their home setting
- Numerous news articles including several front page stories in the Herald and stories in other papers promoted participation in the program
<http://www.heraldnet.com/article/20090120/BLOG15/901209970>
<http://www.heraldnet.com/article/20090117/NEWS01/701179768#>
- WSU Sno Co Extension Growing Groceries program was a 2009 Finalist for the KSER Independent Public Radio’s “Voice of the Community” Award
<http://www.kser.org/community>
- 12,685 pounds of freshly picked, organically grown produce (vegetables, fruits, berries, and herbs) were donated to area food banks and another 60,000 pounds were donated in a farmer/gardener partnership to 8 local food banks
- Current program model is being replicated in other counties

WSU Extension Mission Statement

Washington State University Extension engages people, organizations, and communities to advance economic wellbeing and quality of life by connecting them to the knowledge base of the university and by fostering inquiry, learning, and the application of research.

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