

St. Mark Giving Garden at Bertha's - Duluth Hillside

St. Mark Giving Garden and Food Access Project is an exciting health, food justice, community connection, racial equity, empowerment garden project in the Duluth Hillside Neighborhood.

St. Mark AME Church and Healthy Alliances Matter for All are at the core of this collaborative initiative of African Heritage people and organizations — driven by and for Duluth communities of color.



The St. Mark Giving Garden at Bertha's rests quietly on the hillside, looking over the hospital and the life flight landing pad, looking over the expanse of Lake Superior. With the chill quiet of snow cover, it's hard to imagine the summer's vibrant colorful life of vegetables, herbs, flowers, bunnies, squirrels, and people of all ages and races.

These words are being written on the first day of 2022 - the seventh day of Kwanzaa. The day of Imani (Faith).

Kwanzaa was created from African southern solstice harvest celebrations. The aim was for African American people to celebrate ourselves and our history, to have identity, purpose, and direction - similar to what we seed, and hope to harvest, in the Giving Garden for the healing of our communities. It is a 7-day celebration, December 26th - January 1st, with each day featuring a principle of empowerment.



This seventh day's principle is *Imani* (Faith). What faith rooted the first season of the St. Mark Giving Garden! It was faith that had Healthy Alliances Matter For All, St. Mark AME, and partners believe that there was a way to respond to the devastation of the COVID and racism pandemics, and the traumas of historical systemic injustice. It was faith that African Heritage people and communities of color hold empowering memory, strength, and creativity. It was faith that seeds and soil and sweat could create space for healing that led to the partnership between the visioners and the Duluth Community Garden Program. It was faith in connections, hard work, and good will that drew teachers, students, families, and community members to begin the transformation of Bertha's - pruning, digging, hauling, mulching. And this same faith drew congregations - Peace Church, Gloria Dei, Temple Israel to move quickly and generously to support the financial and other requirements to root the start up of the Giving Garden. Hundreds of seeds of faith were started in milk cartons and planting flats that would eventually green Bertha's and gift neighbors.

At the closing Thanksgiving ceremony, the pastor and members of St. Mark AME, friends, partners, funders, volunteers, church and synagogue members, children, families, and project organizers each pressed a garlic clove into the restored soil of Bertha's Garden. We pressed these "seeds" into the earth as prayers of faith for the garden's next year of growth, life, and shared nourishment. These prayers were rooted in thanksgiving for the labor, love, and generous support and partnering that restored this 800 square feet of garden space.

Last spring we began our work with digging up invasive species which had overrun parts of the garden in its last few years of under-use. We turned and dug in compost to revitalize and heal the land.

Farmers, gardeners, and scientists teach that healing and nourishing the soil yields healthy food and life. It's beautiful to remember the soil absorbing the sunlight, as well as the music, stories, blessing words, voices of youth and elders, spirit of fellowship. The soil was blest by every footstep of volunteers who watered, weeded, cleaned and shared. The seeds of the Giving Garden vision were watered and fertilized by every gift of tools, drinking and wash-up water, garbage pick-up, advice, and work of construction. The garden grew with every bit of tending by caring, resourceful gardeners. The space was hallowed every time a youth read the words of the Land and Labor Acknowledgement; every time those gathered bowed their heads to remember sacrifices and losses, honor contributions, and believe in resilience and whole communal health.

And the land rejoiced when children and families learned, made music, and celebrated with the Kako Foundation's "Hiking in Harmony" program. The growing plants thrived with each community giveaway and celebration, each youth's work, and with the St. Mark worship and baptismal service.

And finally the land rested as the seeds of Thanksgiving and Faith were pressed into it with prayerful palms. The land dreams of next season's life, healing, and possibilities beneath the blanket of protective compost, straw and leaves... and, now, snow.



We believe that the restoration and growth happening in this St. Mark Giving Garden space is what is happening in the Hillside neighborhood surrounding the garden — a neighborhood with an 11-year shorter life expectancy than its neighbors. We believe that growing the garden, the healthy food, the connections, the cultural identity, and skills will restore, revitalize, and bring greater health.

We thank you all for the ways you supported the St. Mark Giving Garden in 2021. We also invite you to consider seeding into this project as 2022 begins. We will again announce the opportunity to literally seed new plant starts as we approach the growing season. As the new year begins and the visioning team dreams, plans, and prepares for the upcoming season, you are invited to seed now into this season's garden with financial gifts and partnering resources.

Mail seed money to: Gloria Dei Lutheran Church / 219 North 6th Ave. / Duluth, MN 55805

Attn: Kathy Wimer Note "Giving Garden Donation" in memo

Donate online: <https://www.echoesofpeace.org/support>, Note "Giving Garden Donation, PCPH"

Also, the Giving Garden is seeking it's 2022 Lead Gardener and Gardening team. If you are interested or know of potential candidates, please contact us:

Regina Laroche - reginalaroche@hotmail.com or Janet Kennedy - healthyalliancesforall@gmail.com

Please see the attached pages for images, food, and partnerships which nourished garden soil and community.

May the seeds of healing, hope, and life prepare to open in each one of us.

Happy New Year! ~ *The St. Mark Giving Garden Team*





GIVING GARDEN 2021 Numbers

Volunteer Hours - 420, over 30 volunteers

YES (Youth Employment Service) Hours (with City of Duluth):

Young Adult: 235

Youth: 615 for 7 youth

University/College Student involvement:

- 170 hours for 2 UMD Land Lab student interns
- 4 work days for 2 St. Scholastica students; 2 non-St. Scholastica young adults)
- UMD student Engineer Without Borders - design/constructed Water Catchment System (critical this drought year!)

Garden/Food Resources:

- At least 715 pounds Giving Garden produce (see itemized list!)
- At least 100 pounds Friends of Giving Garden Produce
- At least 50 miniature bucket gardens were distributed to the community (3 and 5 gallon buckets containing soil, compost, a variety of seedlings or mature tomato plants)
- Of the 250 - 300 seedlings grown and donated by volunteers, half were given away. The other half were planted in the Giving Garden.

Thank You

GIVING GARDEN PARTNERS

St. Mark AME Church

Healthy Alliances Matter for All

Echoes of Peace: *Planting Connections, Planting Hope* Program

Duluth Community Garden Program (Site: Bertha's)

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church (Fiscal Agent)

Peace UCC Church (Jubilee Funding, Garbage & Recycling)

SURJ (Show Up For Racial Justice) - Anti-Racism Training

UMD Land Lab - Dr. Bertossi (Student Intern and resources)

UMD Engineering, Engineers Without Borders - Dr. Clarke-Sather

College of St. Scholastica - Dr. Carter Vosen (Student volunteers)

Whole Foods Co-op (Water for Drinking and Hand-Washing Station)

Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation

NE Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, U of M Extension

Hiking in Harmony (Kako's Foundation)

Temple Israel

Middle Road Farm

Nomadicblack

Diaspora Gardens

Presbyterian Committee for Self-Development of People

St. Mark Giving Garden Coordinating Team:

Janet Kennedy, Christina Trok, Regina Laroche,

Sarah Nelson, Elyse Carter Vosen, Rev. Galloway (Advisor)

GIVEN AWAY: ~~Veggies~~, Bucket Gardens, Seedlings

*impossible to track passer by's and walk-throughs (side-walk tomatoes whole season; in-fence tomatoes late August-on)

Tomatoes – 440#

Potatoes – 160#

Tomatillos – 8#

Kale – 20#

Collards – 12#

Swiss Chard – 10#

Onions – 5#

Broccoli – 5#

Summer Squash – 14#

Cabbage – 10#

Pumpkin (volunteers) – 17#

Dill – ½#

Cilantro – ½#

Basil – 2#

Cucumbers – 0#, they became squirrel food

Cherry/Grape tomatoes eaten on-site: 10# :) !

Non-Bertha's produce shared - 100#

Bucket Mini Gardens and Potential Bucket Gardens (Buckets of soil/ compost and seedlings): **at least 50**

Seedlings: 6 flats, plus walk-throughs, neighbors, etc.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Drafted By Janet Kennedy

We acknowledge the historic, enduring and current contributions and sacrifices of communities displaced, compromised, oppressed and traumatized by the colonization in the United States of America.

Let us pause to give reverence and honor to the African American people for their sacrifices during slavery, and recognize the enduring violence and long-standing inequitable policies and practices that are still relevant today. We seek to give credence to the past and to the present, catalyzing equity, resiliency, wealth, health, and holistic well-being to be attainable for everyone.