

Script – Broadcast - Growing More Than Vegetables

OSF Community Gardens Foster fellowship and enrichment

The OSF HealthCare Mission of "serving with the greatest care and love" goes far beyond the walls of our medical centers and clinics. We invest in the betterment and wellbeing of our neighbors.

One important way that is being accomplished is through our community gardens. They are established in practically every community OSF serves.

Like those, the one in Ottawa is aimed at addressing the social determinants of health - primarily access to fresh vegetables. Last year, the community gardens in Ottawa and Streator, where there are two, donated a combined 1,500 pounds of food to local food pantries.

Beyond that, the OSF community gardens promote teamwork, socialization and accomplishment.

Similarly, though on a smaller scale, the OSF HealthCare Saint Elizabeth Medical Center Behavioral Health Outpatient Department has created its own community garden plots. These, however, are for encouraging the engagement of patients.

SOT: Shelli Carson, Therapeutic Recreational Specialist at OSF HealthCare Saint Elizabeth Medical Center

"There's intellectual benefits, social benefits, physical benefits - big time - emotional benefits." (:08)

Carson adds, "From a social aspect, community gardens allow people to gather and socialize over a common purpose."

However, the education doesn't end there. Two interns in the behavioral health outpatient department at Saint Elizabeth have conducted research on the impact gardening can have on emotionally challenged patients. Meagan Luptak, from Eastern Illinois University and Stephanie Mendoza, from the University of Saint Francis, say the gardens allow a different perspective for the student of personal behaviors. Learning that, they believe, will have practical applications in their fields of work.

SOT: Stephanie Mendoza, behavioral health intern at OSF HealthCare Saint Elizabeth Medical Center.

"It is nice that you get to interact with so many different people. And you get to learn a little bit more about them. How they, like how they interact with others, as well. You kind of get to see like what kind of thing that they do, what they learn - they start opening up with you." (:14)

Community members or businesses interested in supporting the Ottawa and Streator community garden efforts with a donation or by volunteering, please contact Cherie Reynolds, OSF HealthCare Foundation Gift Officer, at Cherie.R.Reynolds@osfhealthcare.org or call (815) 431-5538.

If you are interested in learning more about or volunteering at a community garden in your area, please contact community relations at the OSF HealthCare.