



# Sola Gratia Farm

## From the Fields

Once a month, I get the pleasure of working with the kids over at Champaign Park District's Douglass Park Community Center as part of the "Garden Club". Two years ago, we broke ground on the Douglass Park Community Garden and each season brings new kids to work with and new ideas to incorporate into the garden. During the school year, these kids range from K-5 and hail from several different Champaign elementary schools. During the summer, day campers from the "Girls Explore" program care for the garden and use it for different science and art based activities. Each new group starts with a few that are unsure of getting dirty or timid of making decisions for living things ("Are you sure that is deep enough? Where do I pull? How much water? I'm not sure where to step...") Each time I come back, their confidence has built and I no longer need to supply the enthusiasm. These kids are not only learning about basic biology and getting more comfortable in nature, they are having mastery experiences that are teaching them that they are capable of growing food and creating something beautiful, the perfect blend of science and art, function and form. Which is why this last season of working in partnership with my co-teacher, Karen, has been such a joy. I'm more of a pragmatic, purpose-driven sort of a gal and Karen is all about inspiring others to create something beautiful and of the heart. Together, we're a great pair and have helped the kids think three-dimensionally in their garden with pea trellis' and bean teepees, to protect the garden from birds and other animals with woven God's eyes and encourage pollinators and add more color to the garden by planting lots and lots of flowers. We also made journals over the winter and are encouraging the kids to track and reflect on the activities by writing and drawing in them. And speaking of the hearts, it has been interesting to see that each new crop of kids quickly develops a sense of ownership with this garden, so



much so that we have to have the discussion of "Who gets this food and what happens if someone takes from it?" Of course, we let the kids take home the produce they would like but each year there has been more than they can use. By the time harvest season is underway, the kids are genuinely excited to gather the ripe veggies in bushel baskets to share with others. So far, they have been giving to either the TIMES Men's Homeless Shelter or the Prosperity Garden's Mobile Market. I think this is truly the best thing to come out of this garden- kids that feel capable and proud of producing something to give.

Stop by any time to check it out!

Douglass Park Community Garden, on the south side of the Douglass Park Community Center and to the west of the Douglass Park Branch Library.

*Best-  
Traci*



July 28, 2016

**SAVE THE DATES**

**September 10:**

**CropCycle**

*hosted by the*

*Illinois Organic*

*Growers Association*

**Sola Gratia Farm**

**will be the starting point!**



**October 9:**

**Sola Gratia Farm**

**and**

**St. Matthew**

**Lutheran Church**

**Harvest Fest!**



**THANKS TO  
ALL OF OUR  
VOLUNTEERS  
FOR THE  
HARD WORK AND  
GREAT FUN!**

**WE COULDN'T  
DO IT  
WITHOUT YOU!**



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