

NCR-SARE Youth Educator Grant Project

Final Report Form

Please use this form to write the final report on your project. Use as much space as necessary to answer the questions. You are not restricted to the space on this form. The report may be prepared on a computer or handwritten (please write or print clearly) and needs to be submitted to the North Central Region (NCR) Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Office by December 31, 2010. The final payment of your grant will be awarded when NCR-SARE receives and approves your final report and final budget summary.

1. PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

- Name: Lutheran Services in Iowa, Beloit
- Address: 1323 Northwestern
City: Ames State: IA Zip Code: 50010
- Phone: 515-817-0923
- E-mail: belinda.meis@lsiowa.org
- Website: www.lsiowa.org
- Project Title: Beloit Learning Garden

- Project Number: YENC09-022
- Project Duration: January 1, 2010 – December 31, 2010
- Date of Report: December 20th, 2010

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESULTS

How did you educate youth about sustainable agriculture? What sustainable agriculture knowledge did they gain? Be specific and include the goals, audience, project activities, and results of your project as indicated on this form. Describe how you planned and conducted your project to meet your project goals. Consider what questions other educators would ask about your grant project and try to answer them.

A. BACKGROUND. Before receiving this grant, were you involved in teaching youth about sustainable agriculture? If so, briefly describe what type of sustainable agriculture training you did and the students you worked with.

Prior to receiving the Youth Educator Grant we did not focus on teaching the children who reside at Beloit Residential Treatment Facility about sustainable agriculture.

B. GOALS. List your project goal(s) as identified in your grant application.
The project goals focused on two areas.

1) Youth served by Beloit will grow fresh fruits and vegetables for consumption by residents at Beloit.

2) Participating youth will learn how food can be grown using sustainable practices through composting, mulching, water conservation and pest management.

C. PROCESS. Describe the steps involved in conducting the project and the logic behind the choices you made. Why did you use this approach? Please be specific so that other educators can consider what would apply to their efforts and gain from your experiences.

This project began in July of 2009 with a joint venture between Lutheran Services in Iowa, Beloit and Bethesda Lutheran Church. The idea began as a way to incorporate volunteers, who have a passion for gardening, in an activity with the children who reside at Beloit. The produce would be used to educate and feed the children at Beloit and offer fresh produce to participants in a local food pantry. Typically there are 40 to 45 children in the Beloit program who are between the ages of 5 and 15. The typical length of time the children remain at Beloit is nine months. The project is a way to introduce the children to the benefits of growing fresh vegetables and fruits from an environmental standpoint and introduce them to hands on learning. To meet the goals identified above we needed to accomplish the bulleted points below:

- *Plan and construct a garden area*
- *Plan and plant a variety of vegetables in the garden area*
- *Maintain upkeep of the garden throughout the season*
- *Incorporate leaning activities into the garden season*
- *Finish the harvest season*
- *Identify plans for the 2011 season*

The first step was to plan and construct a garden area. We utilized green space on our campus to construct a 100x100 square foot garden that is broken into three sections. The first section has 8, 4x8 raised garden beds. The second section is a tilled area that incorporates a variety of ground plants. The third section is a 50x50 square foot "three sisters garden". Also involved in the planning and constructing process was building a sturdy fenced area around the garden to reduce the accessibility from neighboring animals. The garden has been built to plan for long term use. The raised beds and fencing are study and long term fixtures in the green space. In addition to the planning and constructing of the garden we identified plans for garden support systems, including building a composting bin housed inside the fencing to be utilized long term and a watering system. The watering system we are using is multiple rain barrels attached to gutters on a nearby shed. The overall plan of the garden is environmentally friendly including the support systems for the garden. To construct the garden, fencing, and support systems we utilized over 75 volunteers during two work days.

The second step was to plan and plant a variety of vegetables in the garden area. The vegetable list was a joint plan from both the volunteers and the children in residence at Beloit. The children were able to name some of their favorite vegetables to include in the garden, such as corn, potatoes, tomatoes, beans, peas, watermelon, strawberries, raspberries, lettuce, and cucumbers. The volunteers were able list some of the vegetables that would expand the children's repertoire and introduce them to new things such as, zucchini, squash, eggplant, okra, peppers, tomatillos, spinach, pumpkins, onions, radishes, turnips, parsnips, purple carrots, and beets. To include the children in the planting of the garden an activity was held in which the children planted seeds in greenhouse type trays and were able to watch them sprout. They then labeled the sprouts and planted them in the garden. They were able to see which seeds they planted and how they grew through the season. To plant the garden we utilized three separate planting days in which some of children and volunteers assisted in planting.

The garden committee also had to plan to maintain upkeep of the garden throughout the season. This was done in two ways, the first was to utilize garden days in which volunteers came and worked in the evenings for two hours a week to weed, harvest and distribute the vegetables. The second was to have times for the kids and volunteers together to weed, harvest and distribute the

vegetables. This helped the kids to become familiar with proper ways to take care of a garden, name the vegetables that they were eating, and experience healthy relationships. Another goal was to incorporate learning activities into the garden. This happened through the maintenance of the garden as described above. We also purchased the Iowa State University curriculum "Growing in the Garden". This curriculum incorporates outdoor and indoor learning activities along with youth focused books that tell stories about plants, harvesting, pest management, and healthy eating. The children were able to learn from the curriculum taught through the activities. There were multiple attempts to begin a 4H group within the facility however; the barrier was finding a person interested in being a 4H leader. We are currently working with ISU Extension to continue that search.

Another item to plan was how to finish the harvest season and utilize the harvest. We utilized volunteers as described above to harvest and distribute the produce. We also have had volunteer space donated to store some of the winter bearing squash so we can utilize it throughout the winter season. The amount of produce that was distributed from the garden is listed below in section E.

The next accomplishment is to plan for the 2011 garden season to ensure the sustainability of the project. We have had discussions around what worked well with the 2010 season and what needs to be improved upon. We will be looking at altering the crop to incorporate more vegetables that can produce large amounts of food at a time, such as corn, potatoes, tomatoes, beans, and peas. We will continue to have vegetables that the children can experiment with, however, those will be part of a smaller crop to be used for 4H teaching lessons. This will be a better fit to accomplish the goals of learning about gardening, and providing food for over 90 people at one sitting.

D. PEOPLE. List people who assisted with the project and explain how they were involved. Please include educators, farmers and ranchers, parents or others who may have helped you. Also, list any personnel from a public agency, such as the Extension Service, Natural Resources Conservation Services or Soil and Water Conservation Districts who may have assisted with this project.

We had many persons from the community involved in the process of planning, constructing and providing garden upkeep. We also had many volunteers assist in teaching the kids about gardening and sustainability.

To plan, construct and provide upkeep we utilized over 110 volunteers. 85 of these volunteers were one time volunteers. The volunteers were from the Iowa State University and local businesses. The major projects they participated in was constructing the raised beds, fencing, mulching, building a composting bin, and constructing our rain barrel watering system. Each volunteer spent a total of 4-6 hours on their project resulting in a combined volunteer hour total of about 340 hours.

To sustain the garden we did need consistent volunteers to participate in the upkeep and harvest. We had about 15 volunteers participate in this in a variety of ways from meetings once a month to plan and discuss, weed and harvest the produce. There was an average of 3 hours spent each week from May to September on the above listed activities. This averaged 30 volunteer hours per person.

The second volunteer need was to provide teaching activities to the children in residence. This was provided by volunteers and interns each week for an average of 1 hour a week from April to September.

An enhancement to the project that was all donations was a weather station installed on the

garden property. This weather station was installed and maintained by the USDA. We collaborated with the USDA to complete the installation and upkeep of the weather station and it has been able to provide instant data for us regarding the weather, wind speed and soil temperature which is a great addition to the learning aspects of the project.

E. RESULTS. What results did you achieve and how were they measured? Sustainable agriculture is farming and ranching that is ecologically sound, profitable, and socially responsible. Which of these aspects of sustainable agriculture did the youth you were teaching learn about? Describe the youth audience you were trying to reach. Include outcomes you achieved and how you measured them through surveys, attendance, or other methods (if appropriate).

Our results were tabulated for three things; produce harvested volunteers, and learning opportunities.

It was estimated that we harvested 1200 pounds of produce to be utilized between the Beloit Residential Treatment Facility and Bethesda Food Pantry. The items harvested included corn, squash, lettuce, spinach, pumpkins, beans, peas, turnips, radishes, cabbage, cucumbers, zucchini, eggplant, beets, tomatoes, corn, peppers, potatoes, melons, okra and tomatillos. All of the items were counted with an estimated weight given at delivery to the locations.

The second result were tracking was volunteer usage. The reason for volunteer tracking is to identify the number of volunteers it will take to continue sustainability and to inform the volunteers of the opportunities in sustainable agriculture. We anticipated through attendance a total of over 900 volunteer hours into the project.

The third outcome to identify was the learning piece of the garden. The youth reached were males and females between the ages of 5 and 15. There were 40 youth who participated in various aspects of the project on a weekly basis. There was no learning survey that was implemented with the project, however, it was identified that to achieve better results a 4H coordinator is a key volunteer position to have.

F. DISCUSSION. What did you learn from this project? How has this affected you and the young people you are working with? Were the results what you expected? If not, why? Are there changes you would make if trying this project again or recommending it to others?

This has been a great project for the Beloit campus and we will be doing it next year as well as upcoming years. We received more produce than we anticipated. We also received many one time volunteers. The changes we will make for next year is getting more consistent volunteers who can attend work days the whole growing and harvesting season.

The affect this has had on the children who reside at Beloit has been positive. Gardening is a hobby that not many of them are aware of. The process of seeing some thing grow that they planted gave them a new perspective on nurturing in their daily lives. This gave them an outlet for responsibility and ownership.

3. OUTREACH

How did you share information from your project with others? Who were you trying to reach? What methods did you use for telling others about: a. Your project, b. Project activities or events, c. Project results? Be sure to include the names and dates of outreach activities and events and the number of people who attended. Was there media coverage of your project? What plans do

you have for future outreach?

We shared information regarding the Beloit Learning Garden in a variety of ways. We began with informational meetings to persons at Bethesda Lutheran Church, Iowa State University, community groups in Ames, Iowa and USDA. These informational meetings outlined the project we were engaging in, the purpose and our anticipated outcomes. The purpose of these informational meetings was to educate the public and acquire volunteers. Another promotional piece used was a large sign that was donated identifying the Beloit Learning Garden and our partners. This was displayed next to the street the garden was adjacent to throughout the season. The print of that sign is attached. We publicized the receipt of the grant on our website <http://www.lsiowa.org/newsdetail.asp?ID=1293658139>.

During the project season we utilized the local media to promote the project and what we had accomplished. We participated in two events throughout the project timeframe. The first was the Ames Water Festival in which we highlighted our rain barrels and the garden project through the use of flyers and seed packets. The second was a Business After Hours hosted by Lutheran Services in Iowa and the Ames Chamber of Commerce. In this event we also handed out flyers and seed packets. (press releases are attached)
The results of the project were promoted through reports at meetings in the Ames, Iowa community including Ames Master Gardeners and Bethesda Food Pantry. We also participated and were named an official USDA People's Garden.

Please enclose any press releases, news clippings, flyers, brochures, or publications developed during this project. Also send any photos that might be helpful in telling your story to others. Please be sure to get permission to use the photos if they include other people. For photos with children, you will need a parent's permission. Please fill out and turn in a NCR-SARE Image Consent form along with your photos.

Due to the large amount of volunteers, written consent by all was not given for photographs. NCR-SARE may contact us for consent should any photos need to be utilized.

4. PROGRAM EVALUATION

This was the first year the North Central Region SARE Program sponsored a Youth Educator Grant program. As a participant, do you have any recommendations for the regional Administrative Council about this program? Is there anything you would like to see changed?
This is a great project which enables communities to begin looking at sustainability in agriculture and teaching others about agriculture research and education.

5. BUDGET SUMMARY

Complete the Final Budget Summary form and return it with your Final Report. The final budget form is similar to the budget form you turned in with your grant proposal. It has one additional column titled, Actual Costs, so you can show what project items actually cost compared to your proposed costs.

You can only use grant funds for expenses incurred and items purchased for conducting your project. If the amounts for items listed have changed significantly from the amounts listed in the

proposal, please include an explanation with the final budget summary.

Please submit your final report and final budget summary by email by December 31, 2010 to:
BenjaminJ@lincolnu.edu

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If you have questions, contact Joan Benjamin, NCR-SARE Associate Regional Coordinator.
From June 8, 2010 – June 25, 2010 you can reach me at: 402-472-0809 or jbenjamin2@unl.edu.
Please be aware that my contact information will change to what is listed above on June 28, 2010. If you have difficulty reaching me, contact the NCR-SARE office in St. Paul, MN for current contact information at: ncrsare@umn.edu or 612-626-3134.



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**Therapeutic
garden in Ames**

It is June and that means summer weather, family vacations and Great Outdoors

Month. Spending time outdoors can help achieve a more active lifestyle, protect the environment and provide an opportunity to enjoy nature and volunteerism.

Lutheran Services in Iowa's (LSI) Beloit Residential Treatment Center is a rehabilitative environment that provides treatment to children 5 to 15 years old who have behavioral or emotional disorders.

The Beloit Learning

Garden was started this past year as a therapeutic way for children to learn about nature and growing their own food.

What better way to celebrate Great Outdoors Month than by spending time outside gardening? The kids would love to have your help as they

work on their garden throughout the summer. Volunteers are needed to help with garden maintenance like watering and weeding from 6 to 8 p.m. on Thursdays.

For more information on how you can volunteer at the Beloit Learning Garden or with other areas at Lutheran Services in Iowa, contact LSI's Ames office at 515-232-7262.



FUTURE HOME OF:

The Beloit Learning Garden

IN COOPERATION WITH

United States Department of Agriculture

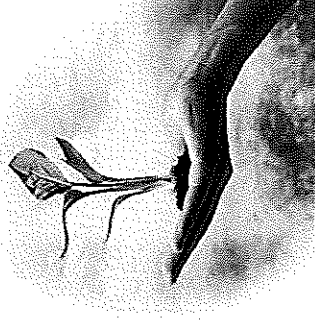
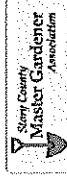


ISU University Extension IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
University Extension

Beloit Lutheran Services 

Bethesda Lutheran 

Story County Master Gardeners





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 2, 2010

Contact: Stacey Maifeld

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USDA Installs Weather Station at Lutheran Services in Iowa's Beloit Learning Garden

Ames, Iowa – The Ames community can find hourly local weather details online at any time, thanks to a new weather station installed at Lutheran Services in Iowa's Beloit Learning Garden. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently installed the weather station at the garden to report local solar radiation, air temperature, humidity, dew point, wind speed and direction, soil temperatures and precipitation.

The Beloit Learning Garden is a collaborative project between Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI), Bethesda Lutheran Church, the USDA and local volunteer and gardening groups. The concept was an environmentally sound way to supply Bethesda's food pantry with fresh produce and a therapeutic way to teach the children at Beloit about sustainable living.

The weather station is helping the children learn how weather affects life and growth and to provide useful information to the USDA. The USDA also deemed the garden an official USDA People's Garden.

"The USDA is using the weather data from Beloit to compile weather information on urban sites and contrasting the information with rural weather data," said Kent Heikens, USDA agricultural science research technician. "As the trend in urban agriculture continues to grow, weather information becomes very important in making decisions related to appropriate locations, soil temperatures and moisture."

The children at Beloit are using the weather station data as a tool to make decisions about the garden. They will watch soil temperatures rise in the spring to help decide on planting dates and they are able to see how much it has rained to make watering decisions. In lieu of recent storms, the children were able to see how high winds affect gardens; in this case the leaning and breaking of ten-foot-tall sunflower plants.

"This has been a wonderful opportunity for our kids here to experience the scientific relationship between everyday weather and our food supply," said Belinda Meis, LSI's director of Beloit residential services. "We're honored the USDA chose our site for the weather station."

This release is also available at www.lsiowa.org.



Weather station updates can be found online:
<http://mesonet.agron.iastate.edu/other/beloit/>.

“The USDA wants to be able to assist in the great work done at Beloit in making these kids successful and help them understand the important role agriculture plays in their daily lives,” Heikens said. “There is a lot more to gain from this garden than just great produce.”

Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) Beloit Residential Treatment Center is a rehabilitative environment in Ames that provides treatment to children 5 to 15 years old who have behavioral or emotional disorders.

LSI impacts the lives of tens of thousands of Iowans annually through residential treatment, services to families, home health care, early childhood programs, adoption/foster care services, refugee resettlement, services for people with disabilities, disaster response initiatives and Barnabas Uplift. LSI serves people of all ages, genders, nationalities, religions, ethnicities and sexual orientations and is affiliated with Lutheran Services in America and three Iowa synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. To learn more, visit www.lsiowa.org.