

Yard Corps Crews dancing their way into the hearts of Akron's Neighbors

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Akron, OH 8/25/22-- There's a new landscaping service in town mowing over the competition...due in part to its unique workforce.

It's a contingency of 12-17 year old kids residing in North Hill and attending either North High School or Jennings Middle School. Like most landscaping services, they mow, whack, weed, till, plant, dig and mulch, but uniquely like none others, they also dance and sing. Depending upon their heritage, it might be to an African beat to "Olandi" or a Nepali pop song like "Godawari Banaima."

Not only do these talented kids perform lawn and landscaping services, but they also attend boot camp to ensure they can stand up physically; tutoring to ensure their mental prowess holds up and create and manage a weekend farmers market and customer picnics.

"Yard Corps is a program that is particularly needed in this age of COVID-19 where the youth can remain socially distant working in the great outdoors as well as remain active and able to socialize with others," says Shanti Community Farms' co-founder and Yard Corps manager Tom Crain.

With Yard Corps' debut this growing season, Crain has 15 regular workers and maintains a waiting list of an additional 15. There's also a growing list of clients who are willing to give these kids a chance to show their newly-learned skills in their backyards. The students also learn and flex their newly-found entrepreneurial skills as they collect extra spending money via stipends provided by Akron's Beyond the Table grant.

"When setting up work crews, we do our best to mix up the kids from the different immigrant cultures as well as using American-born kids," says Bhakta Rizal, co-founder of Shanti Community Farms who also leads the Yard Corps youth crews.

Recent studies have shown that projects like Yard Corps goes a long way in keeping the kids “off the street,” away from computer games and social media and assisting in stemming conflicts among the cultural cliques formed at schools and in the neighborhoods.

“We want to thank the Akron community for stepping up and taking a chance with hiring our Yard Corps crews,” says Crain. “Our clients have found that these kids have such an amazing work ethic and enjoy interacting with them. We have clients who host pizza parties, offer free dulcimer lessons and set up lawn parties to watch their dance routines. It’s been such a great experience for both the workers and the clients.

Contact Yard Corps for any of your lawn care and landscaping needs at 330-634-6489. Sign up for a Yard Corps crew to come and visit by going to the Shanti Community Farms website homepage and clicking on [Yard Corps Appointments](#) on the green and black bar.

ABOUT SHANTI COMMUNITY FARMS: Shanti Community Farms is an educational non-profit urban farm program. We train and empower new Americans and other alternative workers to learn and earn by participating in the local food movement. In conjunction with a multitude of community partners, including [Akron Public Schools](#) with our youth programs, we provide outdoor work projects, farmers markets, and academic tutoring for youth. We strive to ensure that the “*Old World*” agricultural heritage ingrained in many of our members is preserved, cultivated and passed along to the next generations.

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