

Senior Community Gardens Once Again Connecting Residents to Fresh Produce

GREENSBORO, NC - Greensboro Housing Authority (GHA) first began a community garden effort in 1996 at the Hall Towers senior residence. Although the garden program has come and gone over the years, this year community partners, residents, and GHA staff came together in full force to restore the plot at both senior high rises. Joe Oakley, a longtime resident of Hall Towers is excited about the revival of the program and is assisting some novices, "I started gardening here 22 years ago, and I now plan to plant some really beautiful flowers in the center of the garden." The large area at the rear of the property was cleared, tilled, and properly prepared for the garden by GHA maintenance staff.



Resident service coordinators partnered with the local North Carolina Cooperative Extension to attend their master gardener how-to workshops, and seeds were donated by community partners to assist with the cost of the startup. At Gateway Plaza, another GHA senior community, raised



garden beds were built to best utilize the available space for seniors to participate and to ensure ease of maintenance at this location. GHA also supplied plants, gardening tools, and hoses though some experienced gardeners had equipment of their own, eagerly awaiting its use once again. Information for sign-up for the program was posted and before long, the large garden spaces were divided up equally among several seniors that wished to put their green thumbs to effective use.

Resident Emily Watson said of the program, "It is my first time ever gardening. I was surprised at how much fun it is!" GHA hosted the cooperative extension to speak to the senior residents on site about their gardens and to give expert advice. Staff has also provided instruction and expertise over the years, "This is the best group that I have ever worked with," said a GHA lead maintenance technician and gardening enthusiast, of this year's participating seniors.

The demanding work of preparing, planting and maintaining a garden has paid off for Hall Towers' seniors who now have access to fresh produce outside their back doors. A harvest of corn, squash, okra, tomatoes, beans, peas and so much more has these gardeners



excited about cooking. Across town at Gateway Plaza, seniors are using their raised vegetable beds to provide fresh produce as well. In addition, the gardeners have benefited from increased exercise, getting outside, and new friendships through the return of the garden.