

## **COMMUNITY GARDENS PROVIDE FAMILIES WITH FRESH, HEALTHY PRODUCE**

*More gardens mean more people eating vegetables and fruit and enjoying physical activity*

### **Public Health Problem**

- Eating generous amounts of vegetables and fruit is associated with lower rates of chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes.
- Most New York adults don't eat the recommended number of servings of vegetables and fruit daily.
- Community gardens help lower food costs and increase access to produce for low income families, as well as providing an enjoyable opportunity for physical activity and improving neighborhood relations.

### **Program**

- Capital District Community Gardens, a non-profit community service organization, reached out to low income neighborhoods in Rensselaer County to increase the number of garden plots and the number of gardeners, using funding from the New York Department of Health Healthy Heart program.
- A single community garden plot can yield over \$1000 worth of fresh produce in a season, but new gardens require access to water, fencing, storage sheds and gardening equipment.
- Each new community garden provides thirty to fifty additional families with access to garden plots. Community gardens allowed low income families to learn about growing vegetables from experienced gardeners.
- This effort increased the number of garden plots by almost twenty percent.

### **Impact**

- The almost twenty percent increase in the number of garden plots supplies many more families with fresh, healthy food not available in most inner city convenience stores.
- Community buy-in and participation is strong - local communities have donated almost two hundred thousand dollars in land and in kind services to support this effort due to the recognized benefits.
- This community gardening effort transforms vacant lots or other empty land into spaces that provide fresh produce and stress-reducing recreation and physical activity contributing to good mental and physical health.

### **Contact**

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