



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Planting the Seeds of Success Community Gardens Open House January 31st Mandatory Training February 21st

Calling all community gardeners. There will be an Open House for the *Planting the Seeds of Success Community Gardens* on Monday, January 31st from 11:00 to 12:30 and again from 6:00-7:30 pm at Katie's Cup at 502 7th Street, Rockford. All parties interested in learning about the *Planting the Seeds of Success Community Gardens* are encouraged to attend.

Topics to be discussed at the Open House on January 31st include:

- introduction to the *Planting the Seeds of Success Community Gardens*
- grant funding available
- education and training to be provided for gardeners

The *Planting the Seeds of Success Community Gardens* are aimed at promoting health and nutrition through the production of fresh, locally grown food. The project will also connect, educate, and encourage entrepreneurial projects. *Planting the Seeds of Success Community Gardens* should not be confused with the rental garden plots available through the Rockford Park District.

Jennifer Jaeger, Community Services Director for City Human Services, explains that in the fourth year of funding the *Planting the Seeds of Success Community Gardens* will expand eligibility to include other types of groups looking for funding for a community garden,

including those educational in nature or non-traditional groups that serve children and families, seniors, low-income or disabled individuals. “Through gardening, people don’t just learn how to grow vegetables. They also learn how to work together to solve problems. People will be working towards improving the health and vitality of our community. In 2011, we want to maximize participation and impact.” In 2010, the project supported 38 gardens in two counties which were manned by over 900 volunteers and contributed more than 1000 pounds of vegetables to local food pantries.

Cyndie Hall, Executor Director of Neighborhood Network states that “she had been pleased with the positive effect gardens have had on the neighborhoods by removing blight and empowering people, and explained that the program will continue to encourage close ties to neighborhoods.”

A green thumb is not required. “You don’t have to be an expert gardener as Extension staff and our Master Gardeners will work with participants to make their gardening experience positive”, stated Margaret Larson, County Director, University of Illinois Extension. “We are excited to be able to provide technical expertise and educational workshops, and we have master gardeners and other volunteers ready to help from planning through basic food preservation.”

Mandatory Workshop:

Groups wishing to apply for a garden grant must also send a representative to the mandatory workshop on February 21st at either 11:00 am-12:30 pm or 6:00 pm-7:30 pm; location to be determined.

Topics to be covered at the Mandatory Workshop on February 21st will include:

- *Planting the Seeds of Success Community Gardens* grants
- other available assistance
- guidelines, application and deadlines
- planning and planting a community garden

Applications will be available at the Open House and at the workshop, and must be submitted by March 4th.

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Planting the Seeds of Success Community Gardens is a collaborative project with the City of Rockford Human Services Department, Neighborhood Network, University of Illinois Extension-Winnebago County, and Extension’s Master Gardener volunteers. Funding is partially provided through City of Rockford Human Services, Community Services Block Grant funds.

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