

Background

Nurture programs encourage families to increase consumption of naturally grown whole foods, especially fruits and vegetables. Buying quality fresh vegetables can be challenging when shopping on a limited food budget. The Nurture Grown Your Own Food program was initiated in 2010 in response to this obstacle, and was made possible through collaboration with St. Philip Church in Glenview, which established Giving Gardens in 2009.

On March 9, 2010, Nurture invited alumni families from Nurture programs at the Northfield Township Food Pantry to attend a free conference led by Jeanne Pinsof Nolan of The Organic Gardener. The session focused on soil preparation, planting, and harvesting vegetables. Participants were given free seeds donated by Johnny's Selected Seeds and invited to participate in tending the eight 12 x 12 plots that Nurture underwrote in 2010.

In April 2010, organic compost and fertilizer was brought in and, with help from crew members from The Organic Garden, the soil was prepared. Over the next several months the gardens were tended by volunteer Nurture coordinators with the help of St. Philip and alumni families.

“Ground-breaking” - April:



Harvest season – July and August:



Outcomes:

The pictures above are worth a thousand words. Six alumni families participated in tending the garden. Crops, including salad greens, herbs, beans, squash, cucumbers and tomatoes, and beets, were abundant throughout the harvest season and given to participating families and the Northfield Township food pantry. Families worked together in the gardens to learn gardening techniques, understand more about food origins and growth, and experience the amazing pleasure and taste of fresh, healthy food.