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Vision: *“A community where everyone belongs and participates”*

Mission: *“Together with our community, KW Habilitation inspires abilities to enrich the lives of children, youth, adults and families.”*



Our Farm Report 2017

As I sit to write this report for the 2017 growing year it amazes me how fast a growing season can go. Just yesterday we were caring for baby plants and now the garden has been put to rest. Our growing season was great this year. Lots happened throughout the year, lots of learning, lots of participation, lots of surprises and many wonderful moments happened.

We again set some goals this year, some are repeated from last year as we feel these are really important. Engagement with participants we support is our primary goal. Teaching them different aspects of the Our Farm program was so much fun this year. Lots of new classes happened and they were embraced by everyone.

Our next goal was getting what we grow to the houses. We really tried to encourage houses and people we support to get the veggies to their homes. This was accomplished in a few ways and we will discuss further in the report.

Last goal again was to have a large volunteer base to help with many garden tasks. This was essential to the program as we are able to engage the greater community and expose

them to Our Farm and KW Habilitation plus have valuable garden work completed at both sites.

PARTICIPANTS: Our Farm was so fortunate to have a large number of people supported by KW Habilitation through the Vibe that wanted to be involved in the program.

We are amazed at the knowledge they have from previous years and the lesson they previously learned were put into practice. They enjoy coming to both sites, they call 115 University Ave the city garden and they call DFR garden the farm. It's so enjoyable to see how eager they are to participate and complete garden tasks. They love getting their hands dirty and to talk about what they are going to do. We often hear from parents and staff about how Our Farm is talked about at home. This is great and this is how we get the word out. They are good Ambassadors for the program.

115/DFR Site: We were happy to provide three on site Our Farm classes this year.

Two were held at the 115 University location and one at our DFR site. We had approximately 51 people participate in the three classes over the course of the year.

We started at the beginning of the year planning the garden. Participants helped peruse seed catalogues and choose what we grew at Our Farm. This is always an exciting time looking through new catalogues to see what's new, to see what people want to grow and eat, lots of questions and valuable information is shared just searching through catalogues. They like to make a huge garden poster to see what the garden will look like in the summer. We always choose our seeds from a local seed company and the trip with the participants to the seed company is always lots of fun. They are excited to see all the packets, ask the store owners questions and to be given their own catalogue to take home. A real fun trip.

They were instrumental in helping plant the seedlings this year, more so than other years and they have become really good at it. They like to see a seed germinate, grow the seedling to maturity and then pop it in the garden to watch it grow and come to maturity, then pick it's fruit and take it home to be cooked.

We taught classes in tree planting, seed planting, care of plants, how to properly water and weed, mulching, how to layer on compost and green manure, how to stake and tie tomatoes, how to harvest, clean veggies, to glean seeds, to dry and seed save flower seeds. We continued teaching this year about pest control including rabbits, how to propropagate geraniums for our display pots outside. We made bird suet feeders, collected our own sunflower seeds that we grew, cleaned and froze veggies for future canning, etc. etc.

We grew potatoes in buckets again this year with more success. Nothing like pulling fresh potatoes out of the ground, wash and boil and serve with butter. Delicious and they agreed best potatoes around.

The garden at DFR had some unique aspects this year. We dedicated several beds to demonstration plots, planted by the participants so that they could watch their beds grow and produce. Each week when they came to the DFR garden they could see the growth

their plots made and then pick what was ready. Some ate it on the spot other wanted to take home and share with housemates or families. The group likes to see different veggies grow such as brussell sprouts, artichokes and okra. It was fun to see different plants in the garden.

The garden at DFR this year was lovely. Lots of beautiful flowers, lots of great veggies grown, and the lawns were manicured and with lots of volunteer groups, we were a lot more weed free than other years. We found the garden very user friendly for participants and easy access through the rows.

Again commenting on the reactions we get when we have visitors to the garden, we hear amazing, fantastic, I want a garden like this etc. make us proud to be part of it.

We had a great visit from the Summer Youth Exploring Possibilities (YEP) group again this year. They so like coming out to DFR to get a little dirty and to complete a task that we need doing in the garden. Lots of new faces this year and they were amazed at some of the produce we grow. Nothing like eating a fresh baby carrot.

ADS Participants: Our Farm welcomed a group of ADS individuals again this year from November to May. We had 4-6 each week involved participating in a variety of tasks, from planting seeds, to crafts with flowers, soap making, bath bomb making with Our Farm Lavender etc. They enjoy the time we have each week and like taking products home to families.

In the summer time the Direct Support Professionals here at ADS lead the group outside and utilize one of our raised garden beds. They grow flowers, some veggies and like to care for this bed.

99 Ottawa Street – Market Days. – Our Farm continued to have the great help unloading on market days by a volunteer from the Studio. He helped unload every Wednesday afternoon, set up tables and got the market all organized. This year he did some packaging and weighing for us. He likes participation with the farm group and enjoys the job. At the end of each season he asks to come back and help. We hope to see him back in 2018.

Classes at 99 Ottawa Street:

1. Kitchen Prep this year continued with classes being held at 99 Ottawa Street. We continued to teach café prep, it could be anything from soup prep, cookies prep, veggie peeling etc. we have had 4 individuals involved in this group. We also helped with prep for catering.
2. Ambassador Group – this was a group of four participants who were involved in learning to be ambassadors for the Our Farm Program. They learned all aspects of the garden, wrote cue cards, learned how to conduct a tour of both gardens, learned how to answer questions about the farm etc. Great group. This has now stopped for

the winter but will resume in the spring. They will again be conducting tours as needed.

3. Healthy Habits – this is a group of four people who want to learn to cook. They are learning knife skills, quick easy delicious meals to make in under ½ hour, learning Canada food guide, etc. This group will go on to be peer teachers in the New Year teaching others fast easy meals.
4. Green Thumb group – Wednesdays from Jan to April. – This class was lead at 99 and was a fun group of people who wanted to know more about Our Farm and learn some basics skills. Planting seeds, making potato head that grew grass, self-watering containers out of coke bottles etc. were taught.

Yields: 115 Site/DFR site– As of November 15th, our yields at both gardens were really good. Good yields of leaf lettuce, carrots, zucchini, kale, beans (best crop ever), and tomatoes were terrific until we had blight set in. This was a late blight so we were fortunate to have a good yield till that happened. Peppers, onions, garlic, cucumbers, parsnips and potatoes had good crops.

Disappointment in cabbage at DFR even with row covering, however cabbage did well at ADS. Kohlrabi was amazing at both gardens, some the size of small pumpkins. Rutabagas were a failure. Over all you can see we had good yields.

Markets: As of November 15 we held 21 markets at 99 Ottawa Street.

House Pickups: We had approximately 325 market pickups from our Homes.

Online Orders: - We had 125 online orders for the Market Season.

Cost Savings to the Homes: This year we continued to have good savings to the homes. Total savings was \$7,013.00.

Produce sold at market: – with some extra not utilized at the home level, we sold to staff each Wednesday. This generated \$636.00 in revenue.

Our Farm Volunteers: - We cannot say enough except Fantastic, Dedicated, Terrific about the Our Farm Volunteers this year. We had a total of 7 regular community volunteers. We want to thank Selena Volunteer Coordinator for making a lot of this happen. Keep going Selena.

Emily #1 – what a great gal, the participants love her. She has such a great way of facilitating the Vibe groups. She is so quick to see everyone's talents and high light those in the activity she is conducting. She also continued to take her Horticulture Therapy Certificate Course and was able to utilize some of that in her classes. She welcomed a new baby girl in the spring and is currently on maternity leave. We welcome her anytime she is ready to come back.

Mathew- is a full time ICU nurse and was very helpful in many aspects of the early season in the garden. From moving dirt, compost, turning beds, wedding and planting he was a huge

help with ADS Our Farm garden. He also welcomed a new baby girl in early summer and currently is on maternity leave.

Becca – a community volunteer who came from us as a result of taking the Our Farm Course in 2016. She dedicates Wed mornings for two hours. She is great at weeding, watering, and doing lots of dead heading and market packaging. This was her second year and we hope she returns in the 2018.

Gavin – was a community volunteer and he was great in doing some heavy labor here at ADS. He helped move large piles of dirt and manure. He was great at edging and weeding.

In July we welcomed Gavin as a paid employee with Canada Summer Jobs. He returned to school in September for carpentry.

Maureen is a community volunteer, retired nurse. She dedicated 4 or 5 hours each Tuesday to help tend the garden. Her main focus is the sensory garden and pond less waterfall area. Does a great job in watering, weeding, planting, harvesting and anything else that needs doing around here. Great having her on board.

Emily #2 – volunteers at the DFR site. Mainly weeds, did a little planting. She is new to Our Farm this year. Has lots of experience as she is a full time landscaper groomer. Great having her as she is a terrific weeder. She will not return in 2018 as she is moving to Nunavut

Randy – new to Our Farm this year. He took on the task of mowing each week at DFR. What a time saver for us. He made the place look great each week keeping it well groomed.

Corporate Groups – we welcomed with open arms 7 corporate groups this year. Wow!!

Economical, Hacienda Sierra, Alcon, Desire to Learn, Alcon, and Equitable Life x 2 groups. We were astonished at the amount of hours and work that were completed at the DFR site. Lots of good work was accomplished some that we had wished that was completed for last two years. As we always say “many hands make light work” and wow that is definitely true.

Donations to the Program:

- A – Free Delivery of Compost and Soil from Elmsview Farm
- B – Plant cart from Seeds of Diversity
- C – Bird Houses built free of charge for the installation at DFR
- D – Seeds donated to program from West Coast Seeds
- E – Wood stakes made and donated by Weickert and Meirowski Concrete
- F- Garden stakes (row markers) made by community volunteer Mo.
- G – Stakes and netting etc. donated by a volunteers Mom. (Mrs. Trewin)
- H – T-bars (15) and all the bolts for birds house installation by Jay Fencing.
- I – 100 bulbs of seed garlic from connection in Brussels
- J – Approximately 15 flats of flowers from Rockway Gardens

Donations from Our Farm to Community:

1. Large food basket for KW Habilitations Dairy Queen Day as a raffle prize
2. 24 Hours of volunteer work at the Hacienda Sierra Market Garden completed by Our Farm Summer Job Interns

Our Farm Summer Interns:

We were fortunate to have two summer interns for 30 hours a week for 8 weeks at Our Farm this year. We welcome Gavin and Liam. Liam returned for his second year. They both did an amazing job and hopefully we will see them again next year.

Row Grant:

We were fortunate to receive another grant from the Region of Waterloo and a cost sharing grant from Laurel Conservation Authority.

We finished planting all the key lines at DFR. We installed a second windbreak and reforested the bottom of the field at DFR.

Approximately another 1700 plus trees were installed.

We also did a 15 bird house installation. The houses were built by a volunteer and installed by Hacienda Sierra corporate group. We are looking forward to seeing the birds nest in the early spring of 2018.

Community Users of DFR land:

We continue a good relationship with Seeds of Diversity and our Bee Keeper Mark Frey.

The love the space and the DFR site for their individual needs.

Wow that's a lot of stuff. Again as I sit to write this report we are proud of what goes on at Our Farm. How more and more people are getting involved, making more and more community connections and the overall success of the program this year.

The gardens were beautiful this year. The comments, ideas and feedback we received through the year is wonderful. It validates the work we are doing here.

So for 2017 that's it.

Thank you, excited to see what 2018 brings forth.

Respectfully submitted

Jenny Weickert

Our Farm Co-coordinator

