

Urban GEMS News Beet



COLLABORATION GROWS OPPORTUNITY

Greetings! Welcome to the latest issue of GEMS News Beet. It has been a busy and productive year for us at Urban GEMS. As we approach the end of our third year of implementing the Urban GEMS program, we recognize that community collaboration has been key to our results. It has been a great pleasure working closely with our community partners at Reaching Higher Heights 4-Life, the Millennium Community School, the Parsons Area Merchants Association, the OSU African and African American Community Extension Center, South High School, Marion Franklin High School, and Salem Elementary School to serve 164 youth in our community. Urban GEMS benefited from the contributions of awesome people at Africentric Personal Development Shop (APDS), Ministries 4 Movement, Family Missionary

Baptist Church, the GNJ Community Mall, Community Development For All People, Lindsay Ricart (Tower Garden), the OSU Bioengineering Senior Design team, OSU Human Development and Family Science service-learning students, and the Franklin Park Conservatory Growing to Green program. We are deeply grateful for funding support from the USDA NIFA CYFAR program, the Aetna Foundation’s Healthy Communities initiative, OSU Connect and Collaborate, the Battelle Foundation, and private donors.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Healthy Habits Cont.....2
- Healthy Yoga Helps.....2
- Unexpected Experience.....3

URBAN GEMS

Urban G.E.M.S. (Gardening Entrepreneurs Motivating Sustainability) is a positive youth development program that uses gardening to teach science, nutrition, health and wellness, culinary arts, and entrepreneurship. Started in 2016, in Columbus, Ohio this program seeks to improve outcomes for urban teens and communities through food production and positive youth development strategies.

The saying, “it takes a village” gets used extensively in today’s society but what does it really mean? When do we know if collective action is helpful for human development? We have learned over the years in developing Urban GEMS that our “village” is more effective in creating opportunities for adolescents when people work collaboratively toward a common purpose of positive youth and community development. Each partner or supporter makes what we can do with young people better. We are pleased to share our story including articles written by Urban GEMS youth. The youth explain, in their own words, how opportunities have opened up for them as a result of effective collaboration. We must continue to strengthen our village so that the opportunities continue to reach our young people.

—Dr. Deanna L. Wilkinson, Founder and Associate Professor

THE HEALTHY HABITS THAT KEEP GIVING

“During my time in Urban GEMS, I have learned many new techniques and learning abilities. Some of these abilities have helped me discover new challenges and ideas of learning in an environment that I am not used to. Before Urban GEMS, I only spent my time in a garden during the summer time to plant flowers. I never knew of all the other options that were available when growing your own nutritious vegetables and fruits. My time in Urban GEMS was very well worth it, and I will now explain why.

From the very start of my journey being in Urban GEMS, I met new people, learned how to grow my own food, and even got my own tower. The tower were a very new kind of technology in the gardening community that I had discovered. It is so astonishing how well-built the towers are and the effectiveness they have on the plants. While taking care of my tower, “Dinner,” I was able to learn how to check PH balance, clean the towers, and use tonic A & B. I will always enjoy my learning experience with all of my new friends and the great opportunity I was offered.



HEALTHY HABITS CONTINUED...



Everything we have done in Urban GEMS has helped me in my everyday lifestyle as well. Since I am a very busy and hard-working student at Marion Franklin High School, that can come with a lot of stress and anxiety. When I got the opportunity to learn mindful techniques and yoga, I learned how to deal with my stress. Since learning these new and helpful strategies, I have realized how much my attitude and positivity has changed all because of Urban GEMS and I am beyond proud of myself.

The last thing that I can always hold in my heart and remember forever was our community service project. I could remember very clearly the warm and refreshing sun on my skin and the smiling faces on the amazing people around me. This day brought joy to my life, and I loved giving back to the elderly and teaching them how to stay healthy. Knowing that I made someone's day during our project makes me very proud of myself. If I could see the smiling faces and bright eyes on their faces again, I wouldn't want to miss it!

For my last two days in Urban GEMS, I want to enjoy my last moments with these amazing people. I have learned so much from everyone, and I would love to come back and be a part of this group again. From learning new lifestyle techniques, learning how to take care of my own tower, and putting together a fantastic group community project with my peers has made me very happy to have joined Urban GEMS. I believe that healthy habits will go a long way for people, and I am one of those people. Completing the 8-week program will not be the end of my time at Urban GEMS as I am always going to remember everything and everyone on my heart." *-Zoe Harris*

"When I first got help I had no idea what I was supposed to do cause I didn't want to go into something not even knowing how to do it and then just mess it up, but I learned how to do it. I learned how to take care of the plants, I learned how to harvest on the towers, I learned how to put crops on the towers, and I also learned how to clean it out. So I would say that I liked my experience at Urban GEMS." *-Jacob Schneider*

"What I like about Garden Club is that we get to grow plants and we learn a lot about plants. It's very fun growing your own talent and it's fun making your tower grow." *-Deaunna Beatty*

"Knowing that I made someone's day through my service project makes me very proud of myself."

HEALTHY YOGA HELPS

"One thing I really like about what we did at Urban GEMS is when we did healthy yoga. I learned that practicing yoga has many benefits for both mental and physical health. I wonder if people think yoga is healthy. Ms. Megan taught us three moves or poses that I remember –the tree, downward dog, and the beng. We also practiced mindful breathing to calm down if you are mad. Yoga feels good to do when you are mad because it helps me to relax. I will use healthy yoga and ocean music to help when I can't sleep." *-Janiyah Farwor*



PLANT BONDING



“Hi, I am Shea, one of the interns at Urban Gems. This is my first time being here, but not my first time gardening. When I first heard of Urban Gems, I was very intrigued, it was a new experience within gardening, and helped me find an exciting new hobby. To be honest, my favorite part of Urban gems was just being able to be around plants. I love gardening but I am not the best at handling bugs, so being able to find a new way of gardening and not being bombarded with bugs is incredible to me. Along with this, I am someone who bonds with different organizations very easily, my first tower was the only one that I truly dedicated myself to while I was here. It was my job to make sure it survived and had the best plants possible. Success (my tower) and I had a few ups and downs. The second week I had it, it decided to have some pests so I had to get rid of all my gorgeous beets. Later after replanting, I was harvesting and had to change the plants again. But finally, I am able to have my perfect tower of sage, mustard greens, and bok choy.

Success (my tower) has been my goal while being here, I want to take care of it and make sure that it truly does produce some of the best plants I can help it produce. But planting hasn't been the only thing I've done while here. I was able to meet new people and overall change my perspective some. Sadly, I have a busy schedule but Urban Gems is something that I believe everyone should participate in at least once. This is by far one of my favorite things I've done during this school year and in a few years too. Urban Gems has allowed for me to form more of a community and do things I never would have thought I liked.” *-Shea Fergus*

“Don't have your mind made up on something before you try it.”

UNEXPECTED EXPERIENCE

“What I learned over the last 8 weeks from Urban Gems was about tower gardening. What I found most interesting was that people could grow crops indoors in tower gardens. I didn't know much about it. I thought it was only two ways to garden or to grow crops. I thought the only 2 ways to garden was outside in a traditional garden and in green houses. Urban Gems is not just about gardening. It's also a cool place to come hangout and chill while learning. Also it's more than gardening. You could come and interact with some cool people. When I first heard about the internship I thought “hey it's a way to get out of the house, and meet people since I was new to town. I first heard about this program through my 8th period Biology teacher. And the whole class thought it was going to be boring and 'lame' but my biology teacher, Mr. Owens, told me I should try it so I did, and it was better than I expected so I came back. When I first started I thought I was only going to come once, but I kept coming back. So what I learned is don't judge a book by its cover or don't have your mind made up on something before you try it.” *-Jacari Gibson*

