

FirstGarden

About the Project

The FirstGarden initiative was designed to reach at-risk children, their families, and older adults. Through community gardens and complementary, interactive education, older adults engaged with children to understand the benefits of gardening as physical activity and the importance of fresh vegetables as part of a healthy diet. As a result of the program, FirstHealth of the Carolinas established a community garden adjacent to a low-income housing development; and in partnership with Communities In Schools, three school gardens. In addition, a toolkit, designed to aid in dissemination of the project to all elementary and middle-schools in the county was developed. Strategies to establish FirstGarden as a field trip destination for area schools, as well as a learning laboratory for schools and other organizations wishing to establish gardens was also implemented.



Key Accomplishments

- Community garden established in Southern Pines.
- Elementary school gardens established at Academy Heights and Pinehurst Elementary Schools.
- Students with disabilities at Pinecrest High School participated in the Pinecrest High School garden program, with a focus on developing leisure life skills.
- A farmers market was established on the FirstHealth campus to enable produce from the gardens to be sold to FirstHealth employees. Zoning ordinances were amended to make this possible.
- FirstGarden produce was provided to the Boys and Girls Club of the Sandhills Kids Café.
- The North Carolina Cooperative Extension – Moore County implemented a policy that requires all new Master Gardeners to volunteer 20 hours of service in a community garden.



Challenges

- Extensive volunteer time needed to sustain the gardens.
- Transporting children to and from the garden.
- Setting up irrigation systems, especially in drought conditions.

Key Partners

- North Carolina Cooperative Extension (4H, Master Gardeners, and Family and Consumer Service)
- Town of Southern Pines
- Boys and Girls Club of the Sandhills
- West Southern Pines Civic Group
- Communities In Schools



For Information Contact:

Melissa Watford
FirstHealth Community Services
mwatford@firsthealth.org
www.firstgarden.org