



MEDINA COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT

Probate and Juvenile Divisions

93 Public Square, Room 104, Medina, Ohio 44256

KEVIN W. DUNN
Judge

MEDIA RELEASE

August 23, 2019

MCJDC Garden Promotes Personal Growth and the Importance of Giving Back to the Community



The Medina County Juvenile Detention Center (MCJDC) is a secure, holding facility for youth who have committed serious offenses and are a risk of harm to themselves and/or the community, but the Court and facility's philosophy is to provide programming in hopes to create a positive impact on the youth for their lives moving forward. The newest programming endeavor to reach that goal involves vegetable gardens. The purpose of the garden is to create strong, fruitful plants, but the MCJDC garden may be doing more than just that.

Last year, MCJDC Assistant Superintendent Megan Millikin tested an outdoor garden project with a small straw bale garden with the assistance of staff and residents. With the success of the straw bale garden, Millikin, Superintendent Ronald Stollar and MCJDC Youth Fulfillment Coordinator, Jaclyn Balliet decided to expand the project and create four raised garden beds in the outdoor recreational area.

Within the garden, the residents are growing cabbage, eggplant, tomatoes, green peppers, sweet peppers, hot peppers, kale, garlic chives, rosemary, English thyme, zucchini, squash, and parsley. Each day, residents measure the growth of the plants, take photos of the progress, and weed and water as needed.

"Having a garden for the residents to learn about growing and caring for their own food has been suggested a couple of times over the past couple of years," Millikin said. "After seeing how well the straw bale garden went, we decided to expand and it's been great. The kids have really taken ownership and are proud of the progress."

Millikin said the youth are taking initiative for what needs to be done by speaking up when they believe a tomato plant needs a cage for support or if they think additional water will assist with growth.

Stollar explained that while the youth enjoy tending the garden, they understand that they themselves will not get to enjoy eating the fruits of their labor.

"Unfortunately our residents are not permitted to eat anything from the garden," he explained. "We are part of the National School Lunch Program, and everything our kids ingest is strictly planned out by that program and our food service provider, Aramark Food Service, for nutritional and caloric intake."

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Instead, the produce is being donated to Medina County Home for food preparation by Aramark, with the first delivery made August 2.

Judge Kevin W. Dunn said in addition to learning about nutrition, patience, and mathematic skills with the garden, he hopes the youth are retaining the importance of giving back to the community and helping others in need.

“Our goal is to get these youth on the right track, not to punish them for making mistakes,” Judge Dunn said. “We want to provide them with increased communication and emotional management skills, critical thinking skills, and all the tools to make the right choices moving forward. And we want them to be productive members of our community. Teaching them how to grow food and provide for others is an invaluable skill that they can continue to use moving forward in a positive direction.”

Millikin added that apart from learning about the importance of providing for the community, she also has gotten reflective feedback from the youth about personal growth.

“The garden to me means growth,” said one resident. “Every day, the plants in the garden grow and become stronger, which is nothing short of what the residents are working toward every day here.”

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