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Boys and Girls Club Youth Get Down and Dirty with Gardening

Updated 11:00 pm

JENNIFER RIGGS • READER SUBMITTED • MAY 20, 2010

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Members of the Ellis I. Levitt Boys and Girls Club have partnered with the Des Moines Botanical and Environmental Center on a Community Gardening project. The Community Gardens are composed of twenty 10x10 plots located at the Botanical Center.

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The members of the Boys and Girls Club who are helping with the project are part of Earth Heroes, a program that connects youth with nature.

"The youth have been actively involved in every aspect of the project." said Chris Bowman, Boys and Girls Club staff.

The Earth Heroes began work on the project over a month ago when they planted seeds at the Botanical Center greenhouses. Currently, they have been filling the plots with compost, which isn't an easy job.

"Putting the compost in the plots is hard because of all the lifting we do and the compost is very heavy most of the time." said Nadine Veasley, age

10.

The youth involved with the project even enjoy getting dirty and finding insects and worms in the garden plots.

"I love going to the gardens because I love playing in the dirt!" said, Daren Nguyen, age 9.

According to a study conducted by the University of Colorado, gardening has many benefits for children including: healthy eating and nutrition; positive social and interpersonal skills; and environmental stewardship.

Mariah Crook, age 9 said, "I enjoy gardening because I'm helping the environment!"

Rebecca Marvelli, age 11 added, "One of the benefits kids get from gardening is exercise. We put the compost into wheelbarrows, dump the compost onto the plots and then rake it out so it's even."

The Earth Heroes will continue to garden throughout the summer until harvest time in the fall. The food they grow will be shared with their families and other Boys and Girls Club members.

For more information on the project, contact Jenn Riggs, Boys and Girls Club Program Director, jriggs@bgcci.org.

---This article was written with help from the following Earth Heroes members: Rebecca Marvelli, Cynthia Ortega, Mariah Crook, Daren Nguyen, Aerial Diggs, Sandy Le, Karisma Wright, Judith Casillas, Asa Wayland, Lupe Sandoval, Maggie Sams, and Nadine Veasley.

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Jenn Riggs

The Earth Heroes take a break from work to pose for a group photo.

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