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TUESDAY, JULY 31, 2012

Rain gardens, community gardens and more gardens in Camden



Nature Conservancy interns planting at Woodrow Wilson (photo credit: P Doerr/TNC)

Lots of greening and health-related projects are going on in Camden these days.

The Nature Conservancy, as part of a new mission of working in urban areas, has teamed up with the Camden SMART initiative to green and beautify the city.

The Camden SMART initiative, which is a private-public partnership with various organizations in the city, is meant to develop a network of green infrastructure projects such as storm water management with rain gardens.

The Nature Conservancy and its city partners plan to install cisterns, a small rain garden and a system to capture rainwater near Von Neida Park, said nature conservancy spokeswoman Maggie Foote.

With Camden's poor underground infrastructure (sewage and rainwater go into the same pipes), any little bit of rain can cause a sewage overflow. While rain gardens are not the long-term solution, they help capture some of the rainwater that would otherwise go into the pipes and possibly cause them to overflow.

"Thus far, those rain gardens remove about 1.5 million gallons of rainwater per year, which definitely improves the situation," Kricun said.

The Nature Conservancy installation will be at the corner of River Avenue and North 29th Street, which Foote said will reduce storm water flows downhill into neighboring Von Neida Park, a 19-acre city park.

"Rain gardens contain water-loving grasses, wildflowers and other plants that thrive in areas of heavy water flow, and help absorb and filter impure water," Foote said.

ABOUT CLAUDIA VARGAS

Claudia Vargas has been covering Camden's fascinating characters, quirks and city council and school board meetings since January 2011.



Prior to covering Camden, Claudia wrote about South Jersey's interesting dead as the South Jersey obituary writer.

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as well as improve quality of life in an urban neighborhood in the heart of Camden.”

Also this month, state Secretary of Agriculture Douglas H. Fisher announced that New Jersey has enough federal funding (\$3.88 million) to expand the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program for the 2012-2013 school year to 155 schools in 18 counties.

The program provides fresh produce to students during the school day, along with nutrition education. The idea behind the program is that by exposing children to healthy foods, they begin to consume more fruits and vegetables, ultimately leading to improved lifelong dietary habits.

The Camden schools that will participate in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program for the 2012-2013 school year are:

- Davis Elementary School
- Dudley Family School
- Forest Hill School
- John Greenleaf Whittier School
- Lanning Square Broadway Annex
- Lanning Square Elementary School
- McGraw Elementary School
- Sharp Elementary
- Sumner Elementary
- Veterans Memorial Family School
- Wiggins College Preparatory Lab School
- Yorkship Elementary School
- D.U.E. Season Charter School
- Holy Name School
- LEAP Academy University Charter School

Finally, the Camden Children’s Garden continues to prop up more community gardens throughout the city. One of its most recent projects was a large garden in Bergen Square, which it developed in a partnership with Whole Foods. It was one of five gardens Whole Food staffers and Camden gardeners developed on May 23.

The gourmet health food chain has committed to working in Camden for two years on volunteer projects, food security, community gardening, nutrition and horticultural education. A GrowLab School program, Youth Job Training and Employment Program will also be incorporated into the partnership.

“Whole Foods Market will help to advance the Camden Children’s Garden’s overall mission and outreach by inspiring and educating people of all ages,” the company’s news release said. “We plan to work together to provide opportunities to improve the community’s quality of life, health and community through horticulture.”

On the heels of the Whole Food partnership came the release of First Lady Michelle Obama’s book, *American Grown: The Story of the White House Kitchen Garden and Gardens Across America*. The book features the Camden Children’s Garden, the Camden City Garden Club Inc. and Camden’s Community Garden’s Program as part of its display of about a dozen gardens throughout the nation. Pictures of Camden youth gardening and fresh, bright produce stand out in the two-page spread dedicated to Camden’s gardens.

Posted by Claudia Vargas @ 2:40 PM Permalink | Post a comment

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- Yes, poverty clinic plan could help kids combat hunger and violence
- No, that's a tall order for a hospital
- Yes, more involvement with families will mean sick kids get earlier treatment

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No, nice try, but it's up to parents to improve kids' situation

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