



Gardweeno! Progress Report

Catalytic Grants Summer 2014

1. Project Information.

Provide or update the following information. If any changes have occurred, please describe them.

- Today's Date: 9/1/2014
- Program Name: Gardweeno!
- Fiscal Sponsor: North Braddock Cares
- Program Managers: Zena Ruiz and Lindsey Scherloun
- Contact: gardweeno@gmail.com (920) 320-9795
- Web Presence: gardweeno.blogspot.com and gardweeno.facebook.com

2. Project Activities.

Summarize the project activities that were undertaken as a result of The Sprout Fund's support. Additionally, please describe the upcoming project activities, including key dates and activity details. If the timeframe of the project has shifted since project inception, note which dates have changed and describe why.

Summer Accomplishments:

This summer Gardweeno! used a vacant lot owned by the borough of North Braddock to facilitate the creation of a flower, vegetable, and herb garden by the neighborhood kids.

At twice-weekly sessions, kids age 4 - 16 from the area of North Braddock immediately surrounding the garden learned from their adult neighbors about agricultural techniques such as building hugelkultur beds, companion planting, transplanting, harvesting, mulching, pest control, plant disease, rain collection, and proper watering. They learned to safely use power tools by helping to build benches and a tool shed made from pallets. Participants established experiments by using different variables to test problems, for example: beans grown in a pot vs. beans grown in the ground; hair as an animal repellent vs. hair and repellent spray; or a pepper plant planted on the sunny side of our hugelkultur bed vs. one planted on the shady side.

They also learned the importance of their own voices as they demonstrated leadership in deciding what to plant in the garden, decorating the tool-shed and making signage for the garden, creating info-graphics as reflections of lessons learned, and giving tours to adults and other children at the two community cook-outs we held. One participant reported in the midway evaluation that the activity that made her the most proud was when the grown-ups came.

The participants also saw successful models of gardens and the gardening going on in their community through field trips to the Grow Pittsburgh Braddock Farms and neighbors' gardens. Neighbor such as Kevin Comstock and Fran Brashear were visiting gardeners who gave lessons at Gardweeno!, and two teams of teen-age Braddock Youth Project gardeners worked once a week for 6 weeks as mentors along side our Gardweeno! participants.

Gardweeno! has been featured on many tours of Braddock including KEYS Braddock Youth Project orientation, Wilkinsburg Youth Project tour of Braddock, Chatham University Food Studies program tour of Braddock, and the Braddock Carnegie Library tour of partner sites.

Going Forward:

Our fall dates have changed slightly as Gardweeno! will continue into the fall from **September 8 - October 26** on Mondays and now Wednesdays, from 3.30p-6p as an after school program.

We are scheduling scientist and tech experts to lead Wednesday sessions in technology and digital science to bolster the digital literacy goals of our garden program. We are continuing to collaborate with Heritage Out of School Time after school program to test Gardweeno! as a Monday site for their middle schoolers, and Ben Fairless Elementary, our neighborhood elementary school, to offer their science teachers a local science site to use during the school day.

We will host one more community cookout on **September 20th** from 5p-8p and finish the growing season with a fall festival on **October 26th** from 1 - 3pm.

3. Community Engagement. Describe (numerically) the number of unique individuals affected by project activities. List the activity, followed by the type of interaction (i.e. participant, attendee, volunteer, etc.) and number of people impacted by this activity. Gardweeno! Summer Program (24 Sessions between June 14 - Aug 25):

youth participants - 45

adult volunteers - 15

BYP teen mentors - 14

Saturday Community Cook-Outs (over 2 events):

adult attendees -33

youth attendees - 21

adult volunteers -2

4. Outcome Goals. The principal outcome goals for the project are detailed in Section 1.6 of the Grant Agreement. For each outcome goal, describe how you used qualitative and quantitative measures to determine if your project succeeded and achieved the specified effects.

Goal 1. Provide exciting summer activities tailored to 10 - 14 year olds that demonstrate their capacity for leadership and productive work.

We had over 40 kids come to the garden over the summer. Because parent involvement was rather low, the children came voluntarily and the fact that we had an average of apps 6 kids at the garden every session day without a rigid application process shows that the kids wanted to be there. In our midpoint evaluation with the participants, we asked “Why do you come to the garden?” Several youth responded “it’s fun,” other responses included, “because we do activities”, “to do my job”, “to help”. These responses indicate that participants not only enjoy the activities, but some feel a sense of purpose and that they have valuable help to offer. Over 60% of participants evaluated said they had taught something to a grown up, and 7 of a polled 7 adults in the area reported an observed positive change in the attitudes of kids toward the community. Whether or not this is accurate, it reflects at least the perception among adults of local children’s ability to engage positively in the space.

Over 23 sessions, no participant attended greater than 50%. 14 of 45 kids came five or more times or 21%. We consider these kids to be the core group of participants. Of these participants, 6 were in our target age group. The four who participated most, in the 40-50% attendance range were aged 5, 7, 7, 9, and 10.

When younger kids started coming with their older siblings, everyone’s attention was more occupied by the need to help the younger children. Older kids seemed to go to the library and lost interest some.

We played games, one of which we performed garden functions by acting as various parts of a computer, replicating a computer’s internal processing. When Dakotah, our digital expert, dropped out of the program, we focused most on creating investment to the garden among the kids attending. See Challenges for more details about this. Of activities kids would want to do more of, “making computers” was ranked in the top five by 5 of 11 participants surveyed, so we are continuing to attempt to incorporate this into our after-school program.

Kids were more willing to take pictures and document things that were going on then writing about them. Two participants learned to use a DSLR and used it to document events and activities as they learned about higher level photography and digital work. The blog seemed too formal for the kids, and as there were often more activities than participants they rarely chose the job of documentation. From our feedback survey, we learned that the most liked activities were more labor oriented such as watering and planting. Facebook is a platform these kids are more interested in and older participants with Facebook accounts “liked” things Gardweeno! posted. We were introduced a Wacom tablet to the kids where they took photos of their drawings, imported, and drew/wrote directly into photoshop. Drawing was another of the self reported favorite jobs.

We created a welcome table that had flyers and seed bombs, and participants designed and created the Gardweeno! sign that welcomes visitors and identifies the lot as a child-centered space.

They also decorated our tool shed which acts like a beacon for the neighborhood. Because most of our harvest never made it out the gate—the kids ate it on the spot— we had little need for a garden stand and harvest display. We began an info-graphic series “Hot Finds in the Garden” and distributed it to adults at our community events. These included info-graphics made by participants on how to make hugelkultur beds, observations on how vegetables grow, and pest damage in the garden.

Goal 2. Create an inspiring public space where community members socialize, learn, and succeed.



Over the summer the lot has been completely transformed into a garden. People think of this space differently and passers-by comment regularly on the good work we do. Through a midpoint evaluation, we learned that several children were coming to the garden even when adults weren't there. When asked in our Community Impact Survey if the garden changed the way they thought of the physical area of the neighborhood, of 11 community members from the surrounding blocks 90% said it impacted the area positively; “the green and cooperation is inspiring,” “beautified,” “makes it better,” “when i'm here people make me feel like i'm home.” Adult community members regularly come to socialize in the space, visiting and speaking with the adult staff, or parents watching their children work and learn. Our first community cook-out had 14 adult attendees and the second one had 33. Here these community members learned small lessons from youth participants who gave tours and explained the processes they had learned. The adults were also given the info-graphic series to learn about the techniques we used. At the community cook-outs and on regular program days several adult community members came and were given potted plants to plant in their yards and small lessons on how to care for the plants.

North Braddock Cares felt inspired and welcomed to use Gardweeno! to host their Open Meeting for new member recruitment. The setting of this meeting was well received by Cares members, North Braddock council members, the mayor of North Braddock, and more importantly the setting was accessible to local residents who felt welcomed to join in the conversation and learn what the organization had to say, and stay for a campfire with s'mores.

Over the summer, Gardweeno! participants were connected to gardeners in their community by going on two field trips, one to the garden of Charles Gross, and one to Grow Pittsburgh Braddock Farms; visits by neighbors Kevin Comstock and Fran Brashear, who came to the site and gave lessons in gardening and wildlife; and work with gardeners from the Braddock Youth Project. The young participants are also incredibly proud of their garden and give tours to community members who are willing to have them, at times clamoring to be the “Garden Ambassador” to any given visitor.

Over the summer we recorded involvement by 40 different adult community members and 14 teen mentors, but did not include a count of passers by who were engaged by staff or youth, given fresh

green beans and seed bombs in front of the garden, or family members who received produce that was taken home. We estimate at least fifteen additional individuals were engaged in this way.

As our harvest is rarely enough to sell after our young participants have eaten what they wanted, we have begun making wreaths from grapevines removed from the back area, to raffle at the North Braddock Cares Boys and Girls Night Out in order to make some revenue to go toward the North Braddock Cares Fall Festival and for programming next year. We have also discussed creative contributions to the Fall Festival that use the resources we already have, such as a gourd cannon.

Goal 3. Evaluate success of this pilot for a sustained Gardweeno! program in North Braddock.

We have administered baseline evaluations for most of our regular participants using the Strickland Nowicky locus of control test as well as a knowledge and interest questionnaire in gardening and the out of doors. We have not administered the closing evaluation as we have two months of programming still planned.

On the topic of change that has occurred on the block, community members have given a lot of feedback both informally in conversations and on our Community Impact Survey. One community member said of his first impressions of the garden at the beginning of the summer, “I thought it was important gesture” and “it would take more energy than anyone has,” and on August 23 wrote “I’m impressed!” Other community members have observed “a lot of progress,” “good people that are being very nice to me,” “It’s a good view to see,” “things are really going well here!” Many also commented on the impact it has on the children saying things like “they will know they have the ability to make positive change,” “It’s great that the kid are learning so much.” Parents have commented positively about the way their children are eating differently and the sense of pride the kids have in the work they do here.

We received suggestions as well from both participating youth and community members that are influencing the decisions regarding landscape design and program design for the fall session. These include individual youth wanting to grow specific food items. In response to this, we are offering special projects for participants throughout the fall. Mikala for instance, wants to grow strawberries, so she has agreed to be in charge of determining where to place the strawberries, what to do to make the soil amenable for strawberries, and involving her peers in the labor involved in planting them. Throughout this period we will sample strawberries varieties and recipes. Other youth have expressed interest in fruit and we have begun plans for a food forest in the back area of the lot which will have fruit trees and other edible perennial plants.

Community members have suggested community work-days to help quickly clear the back area in order to get started on the food forest, and having Saturday sessions in the fall. We are continuing to understand our community and its needs and are using this feedback to modify our plans for the fall as well as for next year in terms of hours that are most appropriate, our capacity and need for drop-ins, and even topics and areas relevant for evaluation.

Gardweeno! has been well received by the community and we’ve established close relationships with the Braddock Youth Project, local businesses (ie. Nina’s Hair Studio donated hair clippings as a pest deterrent), and are continuing to establish relationships with Transformazium, Ben Fairless Elementary, HOST and Chatham University Food Studies Program. We are looking forward to the ways this garden will continue to inspire the community and respond to its needs and desires.

5. Challenges. Please describe challenges you faced (or are currently facing) and how you overcame them (or plan to overcome them.) Is there additional support that Sprout can provide to help this project reach its goals?

Unexpected Age Range: The age range of the children was not what we had prepared for; instead of ages 10-14 we had children from 4-14. The younger children aged 4 - 8 needed more attention in activity oversight and in behavioral oversight. They wanted to be doing what the middle schoolers were doing, but this age group couldn’t do the same things as the older kids. Our instruction shifted to accom-

modate our younger audience and many of our planned activities fell to the wayside and the older participants lost interest.

As we move forward, we are specifically recruiting middle school age children from HOST and giving the older participants special attention with regard to projects and goals. Hopefully we can repopulate the program with older kids to create a more inviting atmosphere that is geared toward them.

Lack of Independent Work Ability: We had imagined that each child would pick an activity and work together as different parts of a machine. Even when multiple tasks were assigned or offered, we found that only those participants being engaged by an adult were doing what they had chosen to work on. This is the biggest reason that we have not accomplished all of our material goals in the garden, i.e. certain crops planted, signage made, blog documentation by participants.

What we have inferred is that the ultimate motivator for the kids to come to the garden is the attention they are given by older youth and adults. Arguments came from competing for specific jobs and for attention. Because we anticipated youth to be engaged for a long term and to arrive at the start and leave at the end of the session, we expected the days to run in a more organized and self monitoring way. We found that because the attendance was so sporadic, one adult was not enough to staff the garden and all the many needs of the participants on any given day. We called on volunteers to help with this and going forward we are continuing to seek adult and teen mentors as well as ensure that two staff members are on site each session. This way we can work in smaller groups, and give more attention to individual participants. An ideal plan for the fall is to have one adult per 3 or 4 children.

Arguments and Disrespect among Participants: Another problem we had with the mixed ages was that the older ones would instigate issues with the younger ones; arguing and name calling was a major problem in the beginning. The way we addressed issues like these was having the children involved in major arguments leave the garden for 10 minutes and return when they were ready to participate. We addressed the name calling by having a big laminated word “RESPECT” that the kids helped put up in the garden to be read whenever name calling ensued. We would point to the sign and ask the child what that word said; they would say it and we’d ask if they were being respectful towards the other person; they’d say no or look down. When we made it clear that this space had to be respected as well as those within it, youth that were asked to leave would come back with a new attitude, responding well to the clear boundaries and the opportunity to have another chance.

Lack of Consistent Attendance: Having the applications for the program didn’t help keep children committed to the program. Even beyond our anticipated challenge of participants coming every session, they didn’t come for the entire session, or for many sessions in a row. This inconsistency made it hard to have any structured programming at the garden.

Because the after school sessions are related to school release times, we are hoping that more participants will start at the same time. We are also planning on establishing a schedule so participants can anticipate activities and know they will miss certain activities if they are late. We plan to provide a snack of some kind and also homework help if needed as incentive to participate. Also, giving the older kids their own self defined projects as opposed to everyone working on staff-defined projects together may encourage independent work, keep them focused, and limit the amount of arguing in the garden.

Incorporating Technology in the Garden: Our technology component was put to a pause because our digital team member had unforeseen work commitments this summer. This was probably for the best because Gardweeno! participants were not fluent enough with garden practices, nor invested enough in the garden at the onset for that kind of structure. It took us 2 months to establish trust and respectful relationships with the children. Since mid July we’ve been looking for an educator for the programming portion of the project who is fluent in digital technologies and can run a Wednesday tech day. We have

had little response so far and are also pursuing partnerships with scientists at Pitt's Geological and Planetary Sciences department and other technology experts with little availability for a longer commitment who can come to do individual sessions in specific environmental technologies.

6. Media Stories. Provide a summative report of all media attention your project has received to date.

Our Facebook site has been our best promotional tool and posts have been shared on North Braddock Cares, North Braddock Network, Braddock Youth Project and Braddock Redux Facebook pages. We were also featured in The Valley Mirror newspaper in late August.

7. Planned Future Activities.

Beginning September 8, we will have a school-year after school program Mondays and Wednesdays 3:30 - 6pm. Here 2 staff members will guide youth in special projects and garden maintenance.

We have two more community cook-out events planned, one Sept 20, and one Oct 26 which will be our season-closing celebration in conjunction with the North Braddock Cares Fall Festival.

We plan to continue this project next summer, starting with an after-school component in late spring and then a summer 2015 program. Many of the projects youth will be working on this fall will not be evident until the spring when the plants come up again.

8. Budget to Actual. Please attach a budget-to-actual expense report for the Sprout grant funds used by the project. If a disbursement is requested, describe the anticipated use of the remaining funds.