



Ohio

Cleveland's Steps Program

Organizing community gardens

What is the public health problem?

Low rates of fresh fruit and vegetable consumption and high rates of physical inactivity are important public health concerns in Cleveland, Ohio.

According to data from the 2005 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, approximately 70% of Cleveland's adults ate fewer than five servings of fruits and vegetable per day and more than 50% did not meet the recommended levels of physical activity.*

How Steps is responding

Since 2005, the Cleveland Steps Program has been working with the Community Gardening Program (CGP) at Ohio State University Extension (OSUE) to help improve access to fresh produce and increase physical activity through the creation of community gardens in Steps intervention neighborhoods.

- CGP offers "Starting a Community Garden" workshops in each Steps community, meets with block and street clubs, and partners with social service agencies to provide gardening tools and resources.
- In 2008, OSUE is focusing outreach efforts on Steps Intervention Schools and City of Cleveland Recreation Centers to help start new gardens.
- Thirteen new gardens were created in 2006, surpassing the eight-garden goal, and eighteen more gardens were created in 2007. All gardens proudly display a "Steps to a Healthier Cleveland Community Garden" sign.

What is the impact?

- The 31 new community gardens engaged 1085 new gardeners in physical activity and increased access to fresh produce for hundreds of families.
- Thousands of pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables have been donated to area food pantries.
- A new farmers' market was created in Cleveland's Central Neighborhood. Six young people are employed to sell the fresh produce they grow at a local Steps community garden through a program sponsored by St. Vincent's Charity Hospital. This new program is sustained through sales at the market, as well as grants and donations from the Greater Cleveland community.
- Local foundations and businesses supported an additional seven gardens through grants totaling more than \$30,000 for infrastructure improvements and the creation of garden-related programs.

Why this program is working

By providing a catalyst for neighborhood and community development, community gardens empower local residents to help overcome the health challenges facing their communities and lead to sustainable changes in the built environment. Besides producing nutritious foods, they help conserve resources, preserve green space, and create opportunities for recreation, exercise, therapy, and education.†

* Most recent data available

† <http://www.communitygarden.org/learn/>