



# Community Gardens of Dane County Community Action Coalition for South Central WI Inc.

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**Save the date!**  
**CAC's Garden  
Bike Tour is Satur-  
day, August 27th.**  
**See page 4 for de-  
tails.**

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## Summer E-Newsletter

July 2011

### The Historic Past of Cross Plains' Community Garden

By Jane Hyer

As the United States developed westward, towns and villages built alongside roads and railway lines. The town of Cross Plains was settled along two major military roads that crossed each other on a beautiful, fertile prairie. People were attracted to the area by the good farmland, abundant wildlife and business potential. By 1880 there were hotels,

a lumberyard, blacksmiths, a shoe store, churches, schools, harness shops, a post office, saloons and other businesses. A gristmill was built in 1857 and the area's first bushel of wheat was shipped out from the railway depot in Foxville. Founding families and businesses included Saeman Lumber and Henry M. Zander's Creamery.



The General Store provided local farmers with the means to trade for items they could not produce on the farm. Flowing through the Village of Cross Plains are the spring-fed headwaters of the world-renowned Black Earth Creek, a high quality trout stream that attracts fly-fishers and other anglers from throughout the Midwest. The springs feeding Black Earth Creek maintain a constant flow of clear, cold high-quality water. The historical attractions of the area -- cold high quality water, fertile soil and a friendly village also created the perfect setting for a community garden project. How appropriate that 130 years later, a descendant of one of the community pioneers would donate the use of a lot for the purpose of starting a community garden in Cross Plains.

Through the efforts and vision of many volunteers, and the generosity of Bob Saeman, Cross Plains has started a community garden. The garden plot is located in the center of the village. Plans include plots of 64 and 256 square feet for individual gardens. Businesses and community organizations can sponsor plots. There will be a gathering place for a series of educational classes and for just meeting and exchanging ideas and information. The local Boy Scout troop will be building benches for the gathering place and maintaining the garden pathways. The Cross Plains Area Emergency Medical Services is acting as the host organization for the garden. The local scout troop will be installing water collection barrels on the EMS building gutter systems to provide a renewable water source.

"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success." Henry Ford

## From the Ground Up –A Garden Built in a Day

Despite a threatening forecast, over 100 volunteers gathered in the lot behind Black Hawk Middle School to take part in a day filled with work, but also plenty of music, food, and fun. The day began early with breakfast and a ceremonial first dig, but little time was wasted as the work began in such a flurry that many projects were finished ahead of schedule. Volunteers from Fiskars, the Home Depot, CAC, and the community came together to turn a 14,400 square-foot piece of land into the new “Growing Together School and Community Garden”.



The space will be used for school gardening activities to enhance and sustain ongoing curricular activities at Black Hawk Middle School and Gompers Elementary School. It includes 18 community garden plots, a community gathering space, as well as a school garden that includes raised beds, a pizza garden, and worm farm.



Students from both schools visited the garden throughout the day, and some participated in a bit of the work. Children and their parents joined volunteers for an ice cream social and a tour of the garden after the official ribbon cutting.

It was a very successful day filled with equal parts work and fun. Volunteers transformed a space from bare ground to a garden that will provide healthy food and opportunities for learning, as well as a wonderful community space. For more pictures and to view a time lapse video of the day, visit <http://www2.fiskars.com/Activities/Project-Orange-Thumb/Gardens/Growing-Together-School-and-Community-Garden>.

## The Community in Your Garden

It's easy to get caught up with issues such as water or weeds in community gardens that may cause us to lose sight of one of the most important functions of the gardens -bringing people together. Building a sense of community in our neighborhoods is just as important as conquering these other gardening challenges, but it's outcome isn't always as easy to measure. The following is a narrative which took place during a meeting at Badger Fountain of Life Church, which was shared with us by a Badger Fountain of Life gardener, Kara.. I chose to share this story to remind us all why gardens are important for our bodies and souls.

The garden received a beautiful endorsement last night from one of our Nepali-Bhutanese friends at the ‘Understanding Bhutanese History and Culture’ event. One of the refugees was lamenting the fact that life in the U.S. seems very ‘boxed in:’

He said, "In Nepal, I spent all the day outside, and I visit my neighbors without calling first. Here, people stay all the day inside their own apartment."

One of the American women said, "Maybe we need to help this community find a place where they can gather informally?"

To which Beda, another refugee, replied -- "Yes, we have it. Community garden."

What a wonderful reminder of how important our community gardens are for not only growing food, but also for filling the necessary need for human connection that our society often disregards. CAC gardens staff loves to hear of these successes, and we would be happy to share your garden's story in our newsletter. Please email Michelle Shively at [mshively@cacscw.org](mailto:mshively@cacscw.org) and share some of your garden's great accomplishments. To read more about the Nepali-Bhutanese refugees that are making Madison their new home see the CAC Gardens April Newsletter at <http://www.cacscw.org/downloads/newsletters/April%202011.pdf>.

## Neighborhoods to Compete to Fight Hunger -One Vegetable at a Time

This summer, a competition will encourage neighborhood gardeners to “Plant a Row for the Hungry”. In an effort to increase the supply of fresh produce to Dane County food pantries, Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin Inc. (CAC) and Olds Seed Solutions are sponsoring the “Plant a Row for the Hungry - Neighborhood Challenge,” a friendly competition for neighborhood associations to collect extra produce from home gardeners for distribution to local hunger relief agencies.

“Last year, CAC’s Plant a Row for the Hungry campaign resulted in over 127,000 pounds of produce being donated to Dane County food pantries by local gardeners. This year, we’re looking forward to meeting our goal of 140,000 pounds of fresh produce, and we think the Plant a Row – Neighborhood Challenge will be a fun way for more gardeners to get involved,” said Michelle Shively, a VISTA volunteer with CAC’s Food Security and Gardens Division.

### Here’s how it works:

- Representatives from Madison area neighborhoods will volunteer to oversee the initiative and organize individual gardeners within their neighborhood to donate extra produce from their garden to a local hunger relief agency. Neighborhood associations can contact Michelle Shively at 246-4730 x234 or [mshively@cacscw.org](mailto:mshively@cacscw.org) to enter the Neighborhood Challenge.
- The neighborhood representatives will coordinate the collection and delivery of clean, good quality homegrown produce to local food pantries. CAC has a list of hunger relief agencies that are seeking fresh produce donations at <http://www.cacscw.org/plant-a-row.php>.
- Neighborhood representatives will ensure that donated produce is weighed and recorded on Neighborhood Challenge donation slips, which are then submitted to CAC by October 31<sup>st</sup>.
- The neighborhood association with the most donated produce will receive a \$200 cash prize from Olds Seed Solutions at the Mayor’s Neighborhood Roundtable Gathering in November.

This collection could easily be organized through a neighborhood community garden. Perhaps your garden already has a collection that is delivered to a food pantry each week. Spread the word to your neighborhood’s home gardeners to expand your collection, then enter your neighborhood in this contest!



## Sheboygan’s 30th Birthday Bash

The Sheboygan Garden turned 30 this year! Although not Madison’s oldest garden (Atwood, Eagle Heights and others are longer established) it is one of the earliest “modern era” CAC gardens which has stood the test of time and multiple development threats well. It is very diverse in languages spoken (12 at last count), ages involved (up to 95), incomes, and education levels as well as the number of raised beds. An oasis of people and plants in an asphalt sea across from long blocks of 5 story apartment complexes, it is a people-friendly place known for its high attendance/participation at events/potlucks and for their finely detailed Garden Handbook.

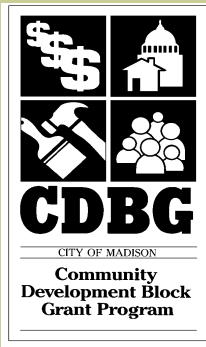
Visit Sheboygan Garden on the web at <http://www.sheboygancommunitygarden.org/index.html> or better yet drop by some time.



COMMUNITY ACTION COALITION  
FOR SOUTH CENTRAL WISCONSIN, INC.

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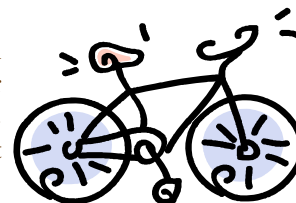


## Come Ride with Us –Saturday, August 27th 9-1

Mark Your Calendars! This year's bike tour of local community gardens will be held on Saturday, August 27<sup>th</sup> 2011 from 9:00am-1:00pm.

Gardens Staff at Community Action Coalition are enthusiastically planning the details of this year's bike tour and finalizing the route. At each stop we will have representatives give a tour and talk about their gardens, highlighting some of its history and what makes it unique and special.

The final garden stop will include a social event for participants and the greater community to unwind, have lunch and mingle while celebrating the collective efforts of our community gardeners. Mayor Soglin has confirmed his attendance and will join us on the ride. More details about this exciting event will follow in the coming weeks.



## CAC Food Pantry Gardens VISTA

It's hard to believe, but I have been working at CAC for almost a year now, and the time has come for me to write my last newsletter. CAC will have a new food pantry gardens VISTA, Shelly Strom, starting next month to take my place, so I wanted to make sure to let you all know how much I have enjoyed my time working with food pantry and community gardens. It has been a great experience to work with many different groups of people that all have the goal of strengthening our community by growing fresh, healthy food for ourselves and our neighbors. I have gained valuable knowledge about gardening, feeding the hungry, and building community, and I feel privileged to have worked with an organization that values our community the way CAC does.

I'll be spending my last month at CAC working in food pantries to help educate their participants about the fresh produce that our food pantry gardens grow for them. I'm looking forward to sharing the bounty of this season's harvest with those in need and educating them on how to prepare delicious and healthy recipes. Thank you to everyone who has worked with me, and I hope to see you all on CAC's garden bike tour August 27th!

-Michelle Shively, Food Pantry Gardens AmeriCorps VISTA

## Get Involved With Madison Area Community Gardens

### How Can You Help CAC Gardens?

There are many volunteer opportunities available assisting the community gardens in the Madison area. Read more about the current opportunities at <http://www.cacscw.org/downloads/2010%20Garden%20Volunteer%20Brochure.pdf>. For more information, contact Jason Clay at [jasonc@cacscw.org](mailto:jasonc@cacscw.org) or call (608)246-4730 ext. 209.