

LOCAL NEWS

Faith Food Fridays cuts ribbon for the new Learning Community Garden

Community gather to celebrate the new Learning Community Garden



Ella Goltiao, 8, and her brother Lio work to put shovels of dirt in planters at the new learning gardens at Faith Food Fridays in Vallejo on Thursday. (Chris Riley/Times-Herald)

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It was a day of celebration at Vallejo's Faith Food Fridays, where dozens gathered Thursday to watch the food pantry cut the ribbon to its Learning Community Garden.

A myriad of vibrant colorful plants in multiple different planters surrounded the backyard, providing an elaborate setting. The garden consisted of rosemary, lime and lemon flowers, brussels sprouts, and colorful flowers. Each planter box was painted with energetic, bright colors with affirmations of prosper, grow, love, happiness, and magic.

Administrative Director of Faith Food Fridays Mary Ann Buggs emphasized that this event was a chance to thank all of the people who helped the garden come to fruition: Faith Bible Church of Vallejo, Vital Village, Sustainable Solano, Victory Garden Seedlings, WAHEO, Angels with Heart, David Benjamin, Micah Sean Setnik, Jack Martin, Jesus Reyes, California State University Maritime Academy cadets, Vallejo's Kelly Moore Paints, Vallejo's Home Depot, and the City of Vallejo Community and Volunteer Coordinator Shelee Loughmiller.

Buggs said the Learning Community Garden came from a Boston medical organization called Vital Village.

"One of the ideas was that they wanted a community garden, where parents and children can learn together how to grow fresh fruits and vegetables in their homes, so, they can learn how to lead healthier lives," said Buggs. "That's how I grew up."



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Buggs, originally from Oklahoma, is Native American. Vividly remembering her grandmother's garden, Buggs says her culture has "wisdom" in growing plants that will sustain.

"The whole goal is for Vallejo to become a healthy community," she said.

Sustainable Solano's mission is to empower the community to grow their own food either through community gardens or home gardens. Sustainable Solano member Lauren Gucik felt "inspired" and "motivated" by the community participation Thursday.

"Seeing how deeply rooted they are in the community made me just feel that this was the place and space to come and heal and learn," said Guick. "Projects always turn out better when they are being led by community members. I saw that here. WAHEO's involvement is so special and magical the way they are able to organize people in this county."

Mary Ann cites Roxanne "Roxy" Reyes as an important supporter of the Learning Community Garden. As the production manager of Smart and Final, Reyes became involved with FFF. Roxanne cleared the backyard of the FFF, which was pervaded with blackberry bushes and began creating the garden.

Originally born on a farm in Texas, Reyes was well prepared to organize and begin a garden. She later moved to Texas, where she first experienced hunger.

"I don't want any other children to be hungry or feel scared that they're not going to have any food like I did," said Reyes. "I believe that learning to grow your own food is freedom. You don't have to depend on anybody."

Faith Food Fridays is open Tuesday, Friday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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