

HCSWCD Food Pantry Art Poster Project

Proposal

The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District desires to collaborate with a local artist willing to donate their time and talents in developing a poster designed for patrons of food pantries as a way of inviting said patrons to consider gardening as a means of food production, stress relief, and environmental stewardship. Our hope is that this artist can convey the information written below in a meaningful and thoughtful way with an eye towards quality, symbolism, and simplicity.

The **HCSWCD Vision** is to engage every citizen of Hamilton County to participate in the protection and renewal of our natural environment. **The Purpose of this Project** is to animate the desire for patrons of food pantries to consider gardening as a way of growing food, finding stress relief, engage in the health of our soil resources, and promote plant and insect diversity.

Background Information: Art has the capacity to create culture, inspire reflection and action, as well as communicate values and vision in ways that words and actions cannot. Art can surface the subconscious-intuitive longings of our hearts and souls and invite us into new ways of doing and being. Art often articulates and reveals emotions or desires in ways that other communicative expressions dimly can.

It is with art that we hope to invite all citizens of Hamilton County into the emotional, physical, and ecological benefits often associated with nurturing our natural environment. One people group that can especially benefit, but are often left out, are those who endure the lack of healthy food access and food insecurity – a growing concern among advocates in Hamilton County. One way of inviting the food insecure community into nurturing their physical, emotional, and ecological environment is through gardening. Gardening has been shown to decrease stress and cortisol levels by 50%, therefore increasing ones sense of well-being and cognitive bandwidth in making decisions and relating well to others. Furthermore, gardening can improve soil health while also increasing ecological diversity. Unfortunately, for someone facing many uncertainties in life (e.g. Where is our next meal is coming from? How will I pay the bills and afford groceries? Will I have a job tomorrow? Is my car going to make it through the week?), it is incredibly difficult to expend energy on something that requires a long-term effort. For those in poverty or facing poverty, it is completely

rational to make intemporal decisions; taking the convenient quick food now rather than investing in something more beneficial later; resembling an unhealthy spiral that leads to increasing despair unless there is help from outside.

The HCSWCD wishes to reach citizens of Hamilton County who face food insecurity by offering our assistance in creating and troubleshooting gardens and gardeners. It has been difficult to reach this particular community through traditional means of creating flyers, etc. Some inroads have been made and relationships developed but desire to be more effective by creating a sense of safety and trust. I believe utilizing art can assist in that cause.

A source of major inspiration while researching for this project came from an individual facing poverty, **"You have no idea how strong the pull to feel worthwhile is. It's more basic than food."** Through the symbol of gardening, this is what I would like to communicate in this art piece – that each individual embodies worth and value as equal as anyone else. That worth and value can be unearthed by simply growing our own food.

Values Communicated in the Art

Interdependence with natural and human communities

Nutritional wealth

Physical strength, stability, and health

Emotional warmth and safety

Self-worth and value

Calming (decreased stress)

Certainty

Project Thesis: A 16x20" poster located in waiting rooms of food pantries that communicate values of warmth, interdependence, nutritional wealth, health, calm through an artistic symbol and vision of gardening will inspire and animate patrons of food pantries to consider gardening as a means of food production and increased quality of life through an increase in cognitive bandwidth.

Contact:

For anyone interested, please contact Andrew Fritz

(Andrew.fritz@hamiltoncounty.in.gov) or by calling (317) 773-2181.