

Benefits from Being at God's Community Garden By Peggy Hanney

The true blessings of God's Community Garden at Calvary United Methodist Church are not the vegetables or the flowers given away, but the interaction of volunteers who work in the garden. Though I am a relative newcomer, I am privileged to have become a part of that family. Many of the volunteers have been at the garden for over ten years.

The regular volunteers age from 55 to 89, with the majority at the high range. With aging comes health problems. Some of us do not hear so well, others have vision problems, arthritis, sciatica, and the list goes on. Three people have dealt with major health crises this year. Fortunately, all have come back and are enjoying the camaraderie and caring from the other volunteers.

Besides this core group, we have been blessed by having a home school family. The two eldest children, aged thirteen and twelve, planted and harvested all of the vegetables in one of the hoop houses. Their ten year old brother has now joined them on a regular basis. Mom and still younger siblings help out from time to time. They are all hard workers.

We also have a group of teens from Looking Upwards that come once a week. These teens do not always talk, but you can read the excitement in their faces as they fill wheelbarrels with compost. To see them interact with their caregivers is amazing.

There is also the nursery school group that wanders through the garden from time to time. They recently entertained us with their carrot song. They are planting a raised bed with radishes and lettuce. Though finding worms is more important to them! They witness the plants growing and can sample vegetables. To see a child, who has proclaimed they do not like broccoli, ask for more is really exciting.

During the school year we have Salve Regina students who periodically help at the garden. Their health and youth is a great asset.

We have organizations, such as Embrace Loans, Newport Friends Church, and the American Girls, that send groups to aid us in the work of the garden. So if you want to be involved in the Garden and gain a wide variety of friends while you play in the dirt, let me know!