

ETF FINAL REPORT – RENAISSANCE SACKVILLE

● GROW WITH ACTION FINAL REPORT ● 2013-14



1) PROJECT BACKGROUND

Project scope

Grow With Action (GWA) is a program that builds youth leadership and environmental stewardship through community engagement and peer-led educational activities. It takes a seed to plate approach, encouraging youth participants to make connections between the foods they eat and the environments they're grown in.

What led to its creation?

Renaissance Sackville and the Sackville Community Garden (SCG) aimed to develop our successful entrepreneurial program (entitled Grow With Action) piloted during the 2012 summer season. The program originally challenged youth to create their own summer business, selling value-added goods at the Farmers' Market. In 2013/14, our vision for the program shifted. As a result, the project departed from its entrepreneurial format, central to GWA in 2012, to establish a youth internship program.

Objective

The main objective of GWA was to introduce youth interns and program participants to a variety of topics related to environmental stewardship and food security. Through collaboration with local organizations and schools, the GWA coordinator and high school interns developed educational activities that encouraged community engagement and youth empowerment.

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2) PROJECT SUMMARY

A) Education that promotes environmental stewardship

With mentorship from the GWA project coordinator, the GWA high school interns maintained and engaged with gardening sites at the community garden while learning organic gardening techniques. They also participated in skill-building workshops, and helped to organize events at the garden;



B) Increase leadership skills & feelings of empowerment

The interns then applied these skills to assist our coordinator in developing and implementing educational programming for youth aged 6-12. This gardening sub-program was entitled the Sprouts Club, and was conducted in partnership with the Tantramar Family Resource Centre;

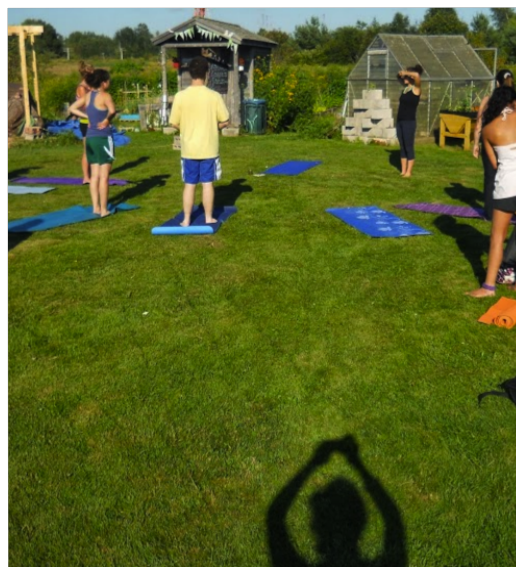


C) Create opportunities for community engagement

Partnerships with local schools resulted in the construction of two “sister” garden plots on school grounds (these mimicked the garden beds located at the community garden). We also hosted three fall workshops to engage both students and teachers in the program.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- 1 Project coordinator
- 2 Student interns
- 3 Schools
- 4 Organizations
- 10 Volunteers
- 58 Youth participants



WHAT DID WE DO?

- 2 School gardens
- 3 Community events
- 8 GWA workshops
- 14 Sprouts Club sessions

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3) PROJECT DETAILS

Primary contributors

New Brunswick Environmental Trust Fund,
Tantramar Family Resource Centre (TFRC),
Salem Elementary School, Marshview Middle School,
Tantramar Regional High School,
and Open Sky Co-operative.

Work accomplished



GWA Internship Program

Details: Our GWA coordinator hired two youth interns who worked roughly ~15 hours/week, supporting Sprouts Club activities, the construction of school garden beds, a native species rain garden, maintaining community garden plots and communal sites, volunteering at Open Sky Co-operative, participating in 8 garden workshops, and 3 events.

Activities included: introduction to organic gardening with GWA coordinator, leadership workshop (discussed team work, leadership pros/cons, working with kids, communication skills, goal orientation), canning and bread making, beekeeping, natural salve/balm making workshop with Anointment Natural Skincare, yoga at the garden with Nava Yoga (an event planned and advertised by the interns and open to the public), GWA fundraisers in conjunction with Struts Art Gallery/Sappy music festival, and more.

Sprouts Club

Details: Sprouts club was held bi-weekly at the community garden in Sackville; 14 sessions were organized; the ages of participants ranged from 6-12 and a total of 6 youth were enrolled.

Activities included: seed planting, learning companion planting techniques, building trellises for beans and peas, watering & weeding, decorating plant labels and garden bed signs, drawing (planning for garden spaces), harvesting produce, "paint with nature" activity – using leaves, grass, etc. as art tools, and more.

School Gardens

Details: Partnerships were forged between three local schools, SCG volunteers and the GWA participants to build "sister" garden beds. Three workshops were held (two at Salem Elementary and one at the Tantramar High); they took a similar "field to fork" approach, encouraging students to make connections between the foods they eat and how they're grown. Students were introduced to new vegetables and herbs.

Activities included: applying compost to prepare garden beds, seed & bulb planting, planting berry bushes, learning organic gardening techniques, activity sheets on how plants are used in society, and what parts of the plant we eat.

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4) EVALUATION

Measured outcomes



Youth Engagement, Leadership & Volunteerism

We hired one project coordinator and 2 high school interns, coordinated the Sprouts Program that had 6 participants, and held three fall workshops at the schools, engaging 52 students and 4 teachers in total. Youth developed various skills and interests, including: techniques for organic gardening, soil health, composting, cooking, and an interest in plant biology and ways plants are used (natural dyes, furniture production, pollination, etc.) Interns also volunteered at the Open Sky Co-operative, which provides lodging, community and vocational support to adults who experience barriers due to social or mental health challenges.



Environmental Programming & Education

Through a unique hands-on educational approach, interns supported the GWA coordinator by helping to plan and implement regular activities with younger youth at the garden. Specifically, outside of their gardening skills, our two youth interns expressed interests in baking, dancing, leadership, and team sports. These elements of interests were incorporated into our Sprouts programming. Interns participated in 8 workshops and our GWA coordinator produced two sets of age-specific gardening zines; these will be used as future educational materials.



Increased Community Engagement

We've established partnerships with local schools and future interest in collaborative programming. In particular, there are two grade-2 classes and a high school class that are interested in Spring planting workshops. TFRC is also interested in continuing our Sprouts Club program. We were not able to construct the garden bed at the middle school so this will be accomplished in 2014/15. Furthermore, the local university and community radio station, CHMA, interviewed our interns and Sprouts Club on their Boardwalk radio show, providing the program with even more community exposure.



Beautification

The GWA coordinator and interns constructed garden beds at the elementary and high schools and supported the planting of a native species rain garden. Flower bulbs, garlic and berry shrubs were all planted in the Fall of 2013 – this will ensure there are plants growing in the Spring, before the school year concludes.

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5) CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions & future directions

Through collaborative and creative means, the Sackville Community Garden's Grow With Action implemented a youth-driven initiative to foster environmental stewardship and increase community engagement.



Overall the 2013/14 program was a huge success. We met our project deliverables and forged important connections with various community members through dynamic programming. The only aspect of this project that could not be achieved was the construction of a garden bed at the Marshview Middle School. This was due to on-site construction that blocked the area we needed to access in order to build the bed. However, there is ongoing communication between teachers and members of the SCG committee, with plans to build the garden plot this Spring.

Furthermore, our partnership with TFRC resulted in a successful youth gardening program, one that we plan to continue. Our interns enjoyed their time at the garden, learned new skills, and acted as leaders to the younger participants in the Sprouts Club. Our future goal is to maintain these partnerships, continue to bring more youth to the garden, and support garden programs at the schools.

Thanks to our main funder, the Environmental Trust Fund, and to participating schools, teachers and volunteers.

