

THE SEED STORIES

Riverview Green Team

By Brittany Barski

In the cold winter months in 2010, community partners in the Ohio City neighborhood began conversations with CMHA about partnering to build the largest contiguous urban farm in the country. Over the next few months, coordination, planning and partnership with Ohio City Near West Development Corporation, Great Lakes Brewery, The Refugee Response, Central Roots, Cleveland Crops and CMHA began to develop The Ohio City Farm.

Throughout the season last year, the farm tenants gathered all of their supplies, started to prep the soil and work out all of the kinks of starting a new farm. The farmers began later in the season in 2010 and with hard work and dedication grew fall crops for a late harvest.

This year in 2011, the farm was up and running in spring and has been patient with the unruly spring weather. This year the first full Riverview Green Team began at the Ohio City Farm. Eight adult residents were recruited from a long list of interested residents from Riverview Tower. The Green Team members have varying growing knowledge and physical ability. Some of the farmers have never grown a plant in their life and a few people grew up on farms and have years of experience.

The Green Team members did not know each other very well before joining the program. After just a few weeks, the residents have truly formed a team. This is what makes the Riverview Green Team so special. Each resident has found a niche that they incorporate into the team. Individuals partner to complete small tasks at the farm and come together as one large group to accomplish the more considerable projects. The residents, turned farmers, get through the hard work with songs and laughter. When the group isn't learning about plant science and horticulture, they are sharing stories and recipes.

Recently the Riverview Green Team hosted a popular high end chef, Ben Benenroth from Spice of Life Catering at the farm. Ben purchases 95% of all of the ingredients for his business from local farms in Northeast Ohio. From a chef who is a supporter of urban farms and gardens, Ben gave a demonstration class on the steps of dividing a whole chicken and different preparations of kale and swiss chard, he also spoke on the importance of growing and purchasing local food.

The Riverview Green Team is learning how to grow food and cultivate the soil, but they are contributing to the health and well being of the residents in their building, their neighborhood, and to the local food system.

All of the produce grown in the twenty-two, eighty foot beds that the Riverview Green Team cultivates is donated to the Riverview Tower residents. But if you are interested in supporting the farm and its tenants, the farm will be open every Friday for produce sales. The farmers will be selling to CMHA residents for a 50% reduced cost inside Riverview Tower from 9 a.m.-11 a.m. and to the public at the Farm Stand on Bridge Avenue from 12 p.m.-2 p.m.