



Middleton Outreach Ministry

For Immediate Release

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Area Food Pantry Teaches Clients How to Grow Their Own Food

Madison and Middleton, WI (June, 2011) Believing that ending the cycle of poverty comes in part with empowerment and education, Middleton Outreach Ministry, which has one of the largest Food Pantries in Dane County, has kicked off an innovative program to teach and give the opportunity to people in need to grow their own food.

“Last year, MOM started a food pantry garden across the street from our pantry on donated land, and supplied the pantry with over 1,000 pounds of fresh produce,” said Cheri Farha, Manager of the MOM Distribution Center. “This year, we have taken it a step further by expanding the amount of garden plots and offering them to MOM clients who want to learn to grow their own food.”

The MOM Teaching Garden is the first of its kind in the area where an actual food pantry has a garden and offers plots to its clients to learn from and supplement their food supply. Student Gardeners are paired with Garden Mentors who help take them through the planning to planting to harvesting process. Students agree to help work in the main MOM garden in exchange for having their own plot. Seeds, plants and tools are provided through donations from local community groups and businesses.

“We have six eager gardeners who are caring for their plots,” said Farha. “We have an experienced team of mentors—including former UW agronomists and professors and several certified Master Gardeners.

The land was donated last year by a nearby businessman, Mark Brunzell, whose wife felt a calling to contribute to the MOM mission of ending hunger and preventing homelessness.

“The MOM Teaching Garden is a perfect example of what can happen when you bring a community together with a driving focus to end hunger,” said Jackson Fonder, MOM Executive Director. “We believe that teaching people to grow their own food and adding to their food supply brings them one step closer to self-sustainability.”

To help boost the flow of produce to the MOM Food Pantry and to encourage community, several open plots are also being gardened by community gardeners who will donate up to 50% of their produce to the pantry.

The garden students come from a widely diverse background in terms of age, gardening experience and life circumstances. “It’s really fun to see kids out in the garden working with their parents. The garden is a great equalizer- no one is treated differently because of their means or current life situation,” said Farha.

The idea for teaching those in poverty to grow their own food came from Patty Zehl, a former Vista worker in the Food and Gardens Division at CAC. Zehl, a MOM volunteer, directs the educational component of the MOM Food Pantry Garden and has developed a curriculum for the students to follow to ensure a full learning experience. Many generous contributions have also helped make the MOM Food Pantry Garden a success including grants and supplies from: Fiskars, Willy Street Coop and Community Action Coalition.

About MOM

MOM is a local non-profit organization that leads a community-wide effort to prevent homelessness and end hunger for our neighbors throughout Middleton, West Madison and Cross Plains. Through our business partners, affiliated churches, area schools, community service clubs, and numerous individuals, we provide food, clothing, housing assistance, emergency financial assistance, and special services for seniors. All programs are provided free of charge to neighbors in need. To learn more about the programs and people helped by MOM, log on to www.momhelps.org. ###

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