

# Neighborhood garden takes root in Sistrunk area



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Neighborhood garden takes root in Sistrunk's Northwest Gardens development

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**S**weltering heat didn't deter volunteers from their mission. Dozens toiled on a recent Saturday morning laying the groundwork for a new community garden in Fort Lauderdale's Northwest Gardens neighborhood.

Green thumbs of all ages shoveled dirt and pushed heavy wheelbarrows to prepare the new plot for fall planting. By the end of the work party, more than 500 grow bags and five young mango trees were in place.

The patch is the fifth garden in the Housing Authority of the City of Fort Lauderdale's Northwest Gardens Sustainable Neighborhood project.

The new plot brings the development's growing power to more than 2,000 planting bags, said Lisa Johnson who is on staff at the Housing Authority.

The communal plots have proven popular with residents. Anyone can choose to tend the garden. All are welcome to partake of the harvest.

"The garden brings the community together. It feeds them, it keeps them happy; it's something they can volunteer to do to see growth in their community," said Trina Grady, regional manager for the Housing Authority. "And for those who just love looking at the gardens, it's a plus as well."

Those on fixed incomes appreciate the savings, she explained.

"A bunch of collard greens can cost you \$3 or \$4," Grady said. "What a better way of getting that pot of greens without the extra expense."

During the planting event, volunteers were treated to locally made Vintage Pops natural popsicles. Kids painted leafy crafts at an art table.

Chef Karen Cherrv, a resident, set up a cooking demonstration to show folks how to turn fresh produce into

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afford organic, that way you can get the best possible ingredients."

At peak times, volunteers deliver the harvest door to door for elderly residents, said Emilia Solano, a director for the YMCA of South Florida.

Solano said interest in gardening has "increased significantly" since the project took root about five years ago. Many students began working in the patch to earn community service hours. They discover they enjoy the work and become regulars.

"It's been very positive," Solano said.

Volunteers are needed at upcoming garden day events on Aug. 26 and Sept. 9 from 8 a.m. to noon at 824 NW 14th Ave. in Fort Lauderdale. For information call 954-594-3509.

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