

Gardener Growers

Janet Nevels & Narkeita Motaabbed

TRANSFORMATION PROPOSITION

What are you offering the community?

Proper dietary patterns are essential for a child's health from birth to adulthood. When healthy nutritional habits are introduced at an early age, children are less likely to experience chronic diseases later in life. Our vision is to influence change in our neighborhood and build healthy community connections through gardening, healthy eating and education. To do this, we will provide hands-on gardening experiences, health and nutrition workshops. Our workshops promise to pique the interest of gardeners from the very young learner to the school aged child. Participants will have an opportunity to grow their own vegetables, have access to nutritionally rich foods, and implement what they are learning through our workshops. During this implementation, we will promote food security, improve dietary habits, and reduce the risk of obesity related diseases.

PROBLEM

Why is this needed?

The problem is threefold:

- Lack of gardening experience, education, and access
- Wealth disparities in the Lee-Seville community
- Lack of access to grocery stores, farmers markets, or supermarkets

Several decades ago, in the Lee-Seville community, numerous residents had backyard gardens and their children grew fresh vegetables in school track gardens. However, nowadays, very few residents have gardens, and their children lack knowledge about gardening. Between 2019 and 2022, there was a significant increase in the wealth gap between Black and White households. For every dollar that White households had in 2022, Black households only had \$0.15 (Thiese, 2024). Considerable evidence has shown 34% of families and 37% of children residing in the Lee-Seville neighborhood live below the poverty level. Poverty, coupled with the lack of access to traditional grocers or farmers markets (within a 3-mile radius) increases the likelihood of continued poor health outcomes, thereby creating a gross inequity to accessing affordable and nutritional foods (Center for Community Solutions, 2022).

We can turn this around. Consider the impact if the community could grow their own vegetables. Parents could harvest fresh vegetables, and families could enjoy nutritious meals. This would ensure that children have regular access to fresh vegetables and potentially develop a love for healthy eating.



IMPACT FOR NUTRITION EQUITY

What's happening with this work in the next 6-12 months?

What we propose to do in the next 6-12 months is:

- Host one child friendly community event to engage and learn more about the desires of the neighbors and to share our plans to provide opportunities for healthy food options.
- Offering a Summer Sprout and year-round nutritional workshop series.
- Weekly food boxes by initiating a fun lottery **giveaway** program.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

We need your expertise: event planners, artists, master gardeners, marketing/communications, and people that work with people building community. Donate garden supplies & equipment, art supplies & equipment, food, boxes, bags, & prizes for events.



Janet Nevels

Janet Nevels was born in Cleveland and is the **Project Director of Canaan-Clara Tagg Brewer Community Garden**. She earned a bachelor's degree from Central State University and a master's in public administration from the University of Akron. Not long ago, she remembers growing up eating lots of fruits, beans, and fresh vegetables. Janet understands how important this diet can be for one's health, which is why she is so passionate about ensuring that our children, youth, adults, and seniors have access to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food. Through gardening, Janet educates others about the importance of growing their own food and ultimately fostering a love for healthy food.

Narkeita Motaabbed

Narkeita Motaabbed is a native Clevelander, an international author, evangelist, teacher, missionary, **Community Garden Student Outreach Coordinator of Canaan-Clara Tagg Brewer Community Garden**, and Home-Based Childcare Business Consultant. She is an alumna of Cleveland State University and a former CMSD Educator. She is the owner and founder of Blossoms Childcare Center, providing hands-on agricultural experiences for toddlers and preschoolers through community gardening and a global education. She is an engaged reader, involved church leader, avid singer, and mother of two adults, and advocate for other youth in her community.

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COLLABORATORS

Who else will work with you to bring this to life?

- Lee-Seville Miles Citizens Council
- Blossom's Childcare Center
- Canaan Missionary Baptist Church
- St. Paul United Methodist Church
- OSU Extension
- City of Cleveland
- SouthEast Michigan Producers Association (SEMPA)

