

NL Community Pantry meets fundraising goal for teaching garden

The North Liberty Community Pantry has met its \$38,850 goal to build a community teaching garden, with plans to launch educational programs in Spring 2015.

“We are overwhelmed by the support for this project and ready to get this garden growing,” Pantry Director Tina DuBois said. “This is a resource we can use to teach people how to successfully plant, harvest, prepare, and preserve food from the garden — a huge benefit for families at all income levels, but especially residents with little to no income, because growing your own produce is often less expensive and healthier than processed foods.”

The garden project was inspired by a grant opportunity provided by The Wellmark Foundation, which is expected to award its \$38,850 match later this month.

“Congratulations to North Liberty Community Pantry for raising the matching funds,” said Stephanie Perry, The Wellmark Foundation interim director. “We are proud of the North Liberty community for supporting this community teaching garden that will help make healthy options available for more citizens.”

The pantry is grateful for The Wellmark Foundation’s support, DuBois said. “None of this would be happening without its generosity,” she said.

The garden will include a teaching patio, accessible raised garden beds, and a rainwater harvesting and irrigation system in addition to a variety of fruit and vegetable plants. It will provide an ongoing source of fresh produce for more than 500 pantry families and educational programs for the entire community.

DuBois said the pantry plans to host a public garden party in the spring, and the pantry already is advertising to hire a coordinator to oversee garden maintenance and educational programs. Application information can be found on the Pantry webpage: <http://northlibertycommunitypantry.org/about-2/employment/>.

Construction of the garden structures, additional soil preparation, and planting will begin in the spring, with the garden’s first crops possibly arriving as soon as June. Those will likely include cool-weather crops such as lettuce, kale, and spinach, DuBois said.

“We invite volunteers in the community to participate in every step of the process, because each step is a learning opportunity,” DuBois said.

In addition to gifts from The Wellmark Foundation and dozens of individuals, donors include A+ Accounting, American Family Insurance, the Ben Newell Memorial Run, the City of North Liberty, Collins Community Credit Union, the Community Foundation of Johnson County, Great Western Bank, Hills Bank and Trust, Mercy Care North Liberty, the North Liberty Community Betterment group’s Blues & BBQ committee, Procter & Gamble, Theisen’s, the University of Iowa Community Credit Union, Van Meter, and Wells Fargo.

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