



The Jazmine Green Memorial Garden Report 2014

The Beginning of a Health Movement

Low-income families have less access to healthy eating options than families in communities that have higher incomes. Furthermore, there are fewer opportunities for physical activity because there is



less green space, fewer parks, and fewer bike paths. In Forest Park Georgia, it was the idea of Ms. Olutoyin Okunoren, founder of Little Ones Learning Center, to to make a change in the community that she had been serving for many years. As a licensed

dietician she knows the benefits of introducing and practicing a healthy lifestyle with healthy eating and moderate physical activity. She decided to begin a movement bringing a community together by educating the parents and children of the Center on healthier food choices and the benefits of physical activity.

Mrs. Wande Meadows, co-director of Little Ones Learning Center, began the movement with a grant awarded for educating children and parents at Little Ones about healthy living. Working side-by-side with the careful planning of the garden project by the Parent Advisory Board, the idea was on its way to coming to fruition.

In the later part of 2012, Little One's unutilized swimming pool had been filled with top soil so, the Parent Advisory Board had a clean slate to begin the implementation of their garden plans.



I, Toni Dixon was recruited by Mrs. Meadows, the Parent Advisory Board president, and my husband, Antoine Dixon and I had a vested interest in the community garden as four of our children had been educated and cared for at the Center for more than six years. Being heavily involved at the Center and within the nonprofit community in Clayton County, our nonprofit, Word for the Nation Nonprofit, Inc., we decided to join in a partnership with Little Ones. The mission of Word for the Nation Nonprofit, Inc. is to edify, uplift and grow at-risk youth and their families to be socially responsible leaders as adults and to positively affect their communities. The community garden was a chance to join youth, young adults, parents and community leaders to a common cause of social responsibility and promoting sustainable solutions in Forest Park, Georgia.

In May 2013, Little Ones Learning Center's teachers, parents, and children, Word for the Nation's staff, volunteers, and community partners such as It's Fashion Department Stores, Chick fil-A and former Mayor Pro-tem Sparkle Adams joined



together in an effort to provide a space to grow vegetables, fruits, herbs, and to grow ideas about healthy living in a

low-income community. After the first phase of the garden had been completed, the garden was dedicated to 2- year old Jazmine Green, a child that unfortunately died two years before in a hot daycare van of a different child care center. In remembrance of her, the Center’s children painted artwork around the garden and created a plaque in her honor.



In the first year, we donated vegetables and fruits to over 40 families through row gardening. To increase capacity to serve, We created a new plan for raised beds. From generous donations from **ProBuild** in Morrow, Georgia, **Home Depot** on Jonesboro Road and in

Morrow and **Hearts to Nourish Hope**, we were able to complete the project as of August 2014.

Now we estimate that we will be able to donate one 3 pound bag of fresh vegetables/ fruits to more at least 5 families per week per bed. So, for Spring harvest, the estimation is that we will be able to serve 180 lbs of food per week for 12 weeks. That is an amazing 2,160 lbs of fresh vegetables and fruits for the Spring 2015 season. This estimation does not include the families that are being served at the Center daily through breakfast, snacks, lunch and dinner. The healthy vegetables and fruits grown in the



garden will be used provide at least 25% of the food for the Center through daily meals, healthy eating activities and workshops for the parents.

Now Little Ones Learning Center and Word for the Nation Nonprofit, Inc. stands as examples of successful partnership to nonprofit organizations and child care centers in the area and throughout Georgia. We are moving in a healthy direction because of your help and support. We are grateful that you have joined us in educating low- income families on making healthier food choices and being more physically active.

Thank you to all of our supporters! If you need any additional information on the progress of the Jazmine Green Memorial Garden or to volunteer, please contact Toni Dixon at leadingnations2014@gmail.com or see our website at www.leadingnations.com.

