

WAIM Community Garden gets new shed, has strong start to season

By **Melanie Savage - Staff Writer**

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A new shed going up at the WAIM Community Garden will house tools, and provide a shelter for educational programs. Photos by Melanie Savage.

The shed will be used to house garden supplies, explained Milius, and an attached roof will help shelter garden volunteers and educational groups such as children from the town of Windham's summer camp. The shed was made possible by donations from a number of sources, including the Willimantic Rotary Club, the local Conservation, Agriculture and Open Space Commission, Lowes, the American Community Gardening Association, and Sigfridson Wood Products.

Murtha-Paradis and Walker "have volunteered countless hours on this project," said Milius. "This would not have happened without their help." The plan is to finish the shed by the start date for the town's summer camp on June 24, said Milius.

The garden currently produces an average of 1,000 pounds of produce that is donated to the local soup kitchen, according to Milius. Numerous volunteers from a variety of different groups currently help tend the garden. The reason the garden is so far along, said Milius, is that the plants were started in greenhouses by local schools including Annie E. Vinton Elementary in Mansfield, and E.O. Smith High School in Storrs. "They give us plants," said Milius.

The Willimantic Food Co-op "also supports us tremendously," she added. The Co-op offers vouchers and member discounts in exchange for volunteer hours at the garden. There are Service Corps volunteers involved, and a local Girl Scout Troop has been helping out. Cowles got involved through a Geography of Food course offered at Eastern. Local high school students, especially from Windham High School and Windham Tech, are involved with the garden. Next year, a UConn course will focus on making the garden more sustainable. Milius is currently working with Windham public schools to develop curriculum focused on gardening, nutrition, plant science and ecology. "We have a lot of great, young energy working to complete these projects," said Milius.

The hope is that the new shed will help to move all of the various efforts along. "We're hoping this will increase our capacity for producing food, because we'll have the infrastructure to support it," said Milius.



The WAIM Community Garden is always in need of cash donations, supplies, tools and volunteers. Contact Milius at 860-336-9005 or sally.milius@wrccinc.org for more information.