

## WAIM Community Garden's focus is on providing food for the community

By **Melanie Savage - Staff Writer**  
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Students employed through EASTCONN put in time at the WAIM Community Garden on July 10. They are (l-r): Angela Vega, Anelisse Morales and Ana Sergis. Photos by Melanie Savage.

On July 10, both sides of the WAIM Community Garden at Lauter Park were buzzing with activity. At the peak of the hill is the more traditional part of the garden, where community members can, for a \$20 fee, maintain a garden for their own personal use.

According to Neenah Shafer, the WAIM Community Garden manager, there are a number of needs in this part of the garden that could be filled by volunteers. There are grounds to be mowed and pathways to be cleared. And though all of the plots are currently being tended, "I know there are two plots right now that could really use some help," said Shafer.

Bill Trevorow, who has grown at the garden since its establishment at Lauter Park 15 years ago, points to some evergreen limbs overhanging the site's large shed. "Those need to be trimmed," said Trevorow, who Shafer refers to as "the master of our gardens."

"He's a great gardener, but he's also a master of people," said Shafer, adding that Trevorow regularly helps smooth over disagreements among gardeners. The garden, like the town that surrounds it, is a bit of a melting pot.

"The Community Garden is an exercise in diversity," said Shafer. Recent gardeners have represented the cultures of Puerto Rico, Mexico, Switzerland and India, to name a few. Trevorow speaks of a family from China that rented a plot last year. The father didn't speak English, "but he taught us so much," said Trevorow. From the father, Trevorow learned a new method for bushing out tomato plants, among many



other things. "He didn't speak one word of English, but we managed to communicate," said Trevorrow.

"A lot of what we do here is help people get along," said Shafer.

About five years ago, WAIM decided to dedicate a portion of the land at Lauter Park to the growing of produce for the local soup kitchen. Andy Ames got involved with this project through the Storrs Quakers meetinghouse. On July 10, she was working alongside fellow volunteer Cate Grabarek to pull weeds and harvest produce. "I basically wanted to play in the dirt," said Grabarek, explaining her reasons for volunteering.

"Cate is very active in all the social service organizations in town," said Ames. "We all know that you never know when we'd be the ones needing the services of the soup kitchen. It's a way of counting your blessings, I think."

And the garden gives back, as well. "I learn an awful lot about organic gardening here," said Grabarek.

Columbia resident Linda Ferbrach has also been volunteering for a number of years. After retiring and starting to volunteer at WAIM, she learned about the garden. "I really love gardening, so I decided to volunteer there, too," said Ferbrach. One of the things that Ferbrach especially enjoys is the diversity of the people she meets from the surrounding community, including UConn and Eastern Connecticut State University. Last summer, "We had a group from sub-Saharan Africa come to work at the garden," said Ferbrach. "It's really fascinating. I love to garden and I love to meet all of these people."

But none of the volunteers lose sight of the main purpose of the garden. "The main issue for me is that it provides fresh vegetables for the soup kitchen," said Ferbrach, adding that the garden produced hundreds of pounds of produce last year. "We're really kind of proud of that," said Ferbrach.

Under the direction of Grow Windham project director Sally Milius, the WAIM Community Garden has been increasing its outreach to local elementary and secondary schools, and local universities. For more on this activity, read here: <http://www.remindernews.com/article/2013/06/17/waim-community-garden-get...>

Milius said that the needs for the WAIM Community Garden run the gamut from weeding, mulching, picking and other basic gardening chores to construction expertise. The garden could use organization and outreach skills for the development of new initiatives, as well as web design expertise. Artists are needed for a mural that's on the wish list.

Donations of money and supplies are always appreciated. "If we can't use it, we'll share it with the other gardeners," said Milius. Contact Milius at 860-336-9005 or [sally.milius@wrcinc.org](mailto:sally.milius@wrcinc.org) for more information or to volunteer.