

Witness and Mercy through Urban Gardening

Location: Mount Olive Lutheran Church, St. Louis

THE SCENARIO

Mount Olive Lutheran Church has partnered with other community organizations in what is called Project Thrive. This is an urban gardening project on the church campus that is used for outreach and human care. It is intended to be a benefit to the community, specifically to help men and women who are recovering from alcohol and drug addictions, and Vietnamese immigrants who are experiencing social isolation and depression. Another Christian community organization will use it to work with at-risk neighborhood youth.

THE MINISTRY

Project Thrive engages participants in three facets of sustainable urban agriculture: production, consumption and marketing of organic produce. Working on the land gives recovering addicts a sense of purpose and helps keep their minds off destructive thought processes that can lead to a relapse or depression. Gardening and farming activities can help reduce levels of stress. Quitting an addiction can provoke anxiety and panic attacks, especially when withdrawal is at its peak. The repetitive nature of many farming tasks enables anxious participants to enter into a more relaxed state as they concentrate on the task at hand. Gardening can help improve a person's health, well-being and self-esteem, especially those recovering from substance abuse, depression or low self-esteem. It helps others to build a social network and prevents isolation in a new healthy lifestyle. It can help on many levels and improve feelings of self-worth, interpersonal relationships, family interaction, vocational productivity, and establishing and attaining realistic life goals. The outcome that is hoped for is to reach out in love to those who are hurting and bringing them to Christ and His healing.

TO LEARN MORE

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Director of LCMS Urban & Inner-City Mission Rev. Steven Schave presents "seed money" to Mount Olive Lutheran Church to start the gardening project.

OBJECTIVES

- Minister to men and women who are recovering from addictions and help them overcome the trauma of social isolation caused by immigration, and train them in urban farming
- Minister to youth who are segregated from society as a result of poverty
- Support a local food pantry, food co-op and community meals programs
- Lead weekly Bible-based Alcoholics Anonymous meetings
- Conduct weekly workshops for youth and adults
- Conduct cooking classes for community residents
- Supplement the existing Wednesday night community dinner at Mount Olive Lutheran Church
- Conduct basic finance classes with project participants and low-income residents of the neighborhood to help them learn how to stretch their food dollars and manage their household budgets
- Provide Vietnamese immigrants with weekly English as a second language classes
- Provide youth participants with opportunities to practice media literacy skills by developing documentaries and ad campaigns promoting healthy eating



Urban & Inner-City Mission

www.lcms.org/citymission

