

Profile from the Field

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Big Muddy Urban Farm and Gifford Park Youth Garden Program

Project Titles: Big Muddy Urban Farm and Gifford Park Youth Garden Program

Coordinators: Brent Lubbert

Location: Omaha, Nebraska

SARE Grants: \$2,000

Duration: 2016-2018

To read the full project reports, go to <https://projects.sare.org/> and search for project number YENC16-101.

Integrating agriculture into urban settings is not a new concept, but more and more, the benefits are being realized by communities, policy makers, and food-system entrepreneurs (NCAT-ATTRA 2018).

One such entrepreneur is Brent Lubbert, whose nonprofit organization is growing vegetables and future farmers on six plots of land in the Gifford Park Neighborhood of Omaha, Nebraska. Big Muddy Urban Farm (BMUF) has a big mission, to not only run an 18-week CSA program, but to also train future farmers and engage with the community. One way BMUF fulfills their mission is through their Aspiring Farmer Residency; it's a 12-month program that supports five resident farmers, providing them with a place to live while they run the urban CSA, vend weekly at the Gifford Park Neighborhood market, facilitate the Gifford Park Youth Garden program, and engage in community partnerships.

“Residents learn the ropes of farming via our CSA and collaboratively managing our urban farm which operates by organic standards,” explained Lubbert. “From this small scale, guided operation, they develop a more realistic understanding of what production-scale farming involves and what they would like moving forward. We teach sustainability by actually doing it... managing soils, analyzing a budget,



With support from SARE, Big Muddy Urban Farm's Aspiring Farmer Residents conducted programming with the Gifford Park Youth Garden in Omaha, Nebraska, including a field trip to a goat creamery.

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having conversations about the food system, marketing produce, self-reflecting, cooking community meals with our produce,” and following weather patterns.”

In 2017, Lubbert was awarded a \$2,000 NCR-SARE Youth Educator grant so that BMUF Aspiring Farmer Residents could develop programs for the Gifford Park Youth Garden Program, a free program for neighborhood youth.

“The 30 youth are provided with their own 2×2 raised garden plot to grow on and a group session each week focusing on different topics including but not limited to: seed germination, composting and soil nutrition, raising chickens, fruit and vegetable preservation, seed saving, and the life cycles of nature,” explained Lubbert.

Through the grant funding, the BMUF Aspiring Farmer Resident held five youth garden sessions:

- Garden Design
- Planting your Garden
- Chicken Biology and Care
- Canning and Preserving
- Pizza Party with Garden Fresh Veggies

The Aspiring Farmer Residents also arranged for the youth to take a field trip to Honey Creek Creamery near Crescent, Iowa. Lubbert said that for a majority of youth gardeners, this was

the first time being on a commercial farm. They toured the small scale cheese making facility, and had an opportunity to milk a goat.

“The SARE grant helped strengthen a partnership between Gifford Park Youth Garden programming and Big Muddy’s Aspiring Farmer Residency by supporting resident’s research and facilitation of youth garden lesson plans,” said Lubbert. “This helps residents develop educational techniques while also providing valuable educational experiences for youth gardeners.”

For more information on Lubbert’s NCR-SARE Youth Educator grant project, visit the SARE project reporting website. Simply search by the project number, YENC16-101, at <https://projects.sare.org/>, or contact the NCR-SARE office.

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