



Community garden nears opening day

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By: Ezra Mann

Growing a healthy future will soon be a theme rooted in Garvin County soil as Pauls Valley's own community garden is set to open up plots for residents in a matter of weeks.

Called the Valley Harvest Garden, a handful of area residents motivated to bring a greener attitude and self-sustainability to the area have set aside land near Tio's Mexican Restaurant with a plan of opening rented plots by Saturday, March 2.

It's an ambitious goal new garden chair Stephanie Webb is all too eager to encourage residents to become a part of whether people just want their own fresh source of vegetables or feel inclined to give back to those who might not get proper nutrition otherwise.

"We consider this a really good step toward staying green," said Webb, who agreed to take on the position from fellow garden club member Betsy White, who helped it get started through the Garvin County Health Coalition.

"I thought it was a really great idea because it's for the community."

Getting a spot isn't all that complicated, though it will be a first come first serve basis for getting one or more of about 60 available spots, said Webb.

The next step coming up is a search for natural fertilizers like chicken manure, which will be plowed in later this month to help get the soil ready for planting.

Those who are interested need to pick up registration forms and sign up at Reynolds Recreation Center in Wacker Park and pay a \$10 rental fee for each plot.

Some of the rules people will need to follow to keep their plot for the whole year includes keeping their spot weeded/contained, not use electric or gas powered tools, not use pesticides or disease control outside of their own non-organic designated area and generally keep the garden clean along with fellow gardeners.

Anyone is welcomed to be a part of the project, though Webb believes some of the biggest impacts on having this activity will be for either elderly people who don't have their own spot where they live or even school kids as a part of class projects.

She is hopeful elementary age kids have the opportunities to pick up the lessons that can come from seeing things go from seed to producing food, even if it is on a weekly basis and plans on approaching some teachers in town.

"People of that generation they counted on gardening as a part of their groceries and a lot of them may still want to do things like that," said Webb, noting how people need to bring their own seeds or started plants and tools to maintain as things grow be it in the rows set aside or raised beds approved on a case by case basis.

"We want to get the kids involved, get them excited about growing their own food because if we can teach them to get excited then it's all the better for them later down the road."

One thing that might have prevented the garden from even being able to take off are recent water restrictions in town that prohibit watering outside because of the drought, said Webb. However, the group found a way to make it a non-issue due to a well on the Burns Densmore property where the garden is, which will be able to provide needed moisture since it is not city water.

In the meantime people can also help by donating supplies, funds or experienced gardening advice since it is a non-profit.

The next garden club meeting, which is also open to the public, is set for Thursday, Feb. 21 at 5:30 p.m. in the Health Coalition building, located at 918 S. Chickasaw.

“Our main goal this first year around is to succeed to the point where next year everybody’s going to be excited to have the garden again,” said Webb.

“There’s a lot of places in Oklahoma where they have gardens and they’re really successful and we really want this to be a success...that’s my ultimate goal right now.”

For more information contact Webb at 405-207-0037, on Facebook through her full name Stephanie Credille Webb or by email at stephwebb51@yahoo.com.