

## **CAMH Garden The Funding Network-Toronto Report**

The Sunshine Garden 2007 growing season was a great year with many successes. Support from the Funding Network-Toronto made it possible to have adequate staff to support the project, make improvements and ensure the continuation of this innovating initiative.

Highlights for this year included: starting a new garden, finding new retail customers, increased outreach to the community, painting our shed, and of course the impact on the gardeners.

This May we were well prepared to begin planting the garden. We started with a crew of 14 new gardeners plus 2 lead hands that we had hired in April. The lead hands were selected because they had already gone through the program and thus have growing abilities. These particular individuals had also shown interest in being leaders in the garden.

We have a wide variety of veggies in the garden, as usual. The gardeners were most excited about the watermelons and cantaloupes. The sugar snap peas were also a favourite.

The most exciting aspect of this spring has been the start of a new garden on the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's grounds. We were disappointed when we found out that part of the redevelopment that is happening at CAMH this fall includes a building on our garden, but were happy to be offered another space to start a garden. We hired four more CAMH clients late this spring to help create the new garden. The team hired to create this new garden has been working very hard, and they have been rewarded with the pride of seeing it take shape. Since the soil at the new site is very poor, we have decided to build the garden using a technique called sheet mulching or lasagna gardening. The process was very exciting and we received a lot of interest from CAMH staff and the community. There was so much interest that we decided to give a workshop on the method.

To create the new garden we put down cardboard from produce that we order for the Good Food Box. We then added manure from a zoo close by (with manure from llamas, buffalo, yaks...!), woodchips from a local tree care company, composted woodchips (3 years old) from a local nursery and finished the whole process with straw from Pfenning's. We will leave the materials over the fall and winter to decompose and broken down by worms. The space is bowl shaped and looks like an amphitheatre, with the beds going across the "rim", four beds across.

The market stall from which we sell the produce in the garden still proves to be a great way for us to sell. The only short fall is that it's not the best selling venue when we have a large quantity of one product. This past year with the high heats our basil grew and produced very well but we had a lot more than we could sell from our garden market. We were able to increase our outreach and we found out that the new organic grocery

store (Organic Boutique) just two blocks from the garden was very interested in buying from us. The Organic Boutique was trying to promote local produce but was having a hard time with the associated logistics; almost all of his produce came from pro-organic. He was more than happy to buy 10 bunches of basil each week and showed his interest and involvement with in his new community.

There have been a lot of tours in the garden as usual. One of them was a group from Botswana who work with youth with HIV/AIDS. They were very interested in learning how marginalized people can find meaning and nutrition working in a greenhouse or a garden. Another was the Working Centre in who are currently developing their urban agriculture program in Waterloo and who are interested in using this garden as a model. Many other community groups come to visit the garden as well and see what we are up to.

We have made improvements in the garden as well. For the last two years in the garden we have been working beside a quite unattractive grey shed. This year we contacted the Creative Crafts Art Program at CAMH. We hired five people from that program to paint the shed with colourful representations of garden and vegetables scenes. The result was beautiful. It was also a great way to connect with other CAMH programs and clients, all while beautifying the garden site even more and making it more attractive to the community. The artist and gardeners loved showing off their skills and their hard work.

And of course the highlight of this project is the impact on the participants. Numerous employees gained resources, skills, support and personal empowerment while being employed in the Sunshine Garden. This gave many of them the momentum necessary to improve their lives in a variety of ways. The work opportunity also provides participants with a chance to prove to themselves and others that they are capable to work and gain confidence through the experience. Also, working in the garden increased many of the participant's familiarity and therefore consumption of vegetables.

Each year we gain a greater understanding of the impact that four hours a week of meaningful employment has on people's lives. Even this small amount of work makes people feel valued and respected, gives them energy, motivation and self-confidence and impacts their lives in very profound ways. The positive effects on participants become more and more clear with every group that participates.

Amy made many great leaps during her employment in the Sunshine Garden. Her rate of self harm reduced, her hospital admission rate decreased, she gained confidence that enabled her to volunteer in the community and got a membership at the "Running Room" so she could work on her physical health and fitness. She also began to take care of plants, which helped give her the confidence that she could also take care of herself. As a result, she moved from a rooming house to her own apartment. She proudly brought pictures of her new place to work to show the staff.

Also, Jason has had many benefits from working in the garden. He is part of the law and mental health program. And during that period he moved from the highest security level

to the lowest. The board had recommended that he move to a less secure unit, but the staff team saw no motivation or inclination in Jason to participate in group activities. But after the first two month into the gardening program, the staff saw major changes in attitude and willingness to participate in ward group activities. He then applied for and was given a position at Out of this World Café where he currently works 28 to 30 hours a week.

Overall, this was another successful year in the garden, with huge impacts on the individual, institutional, environmental and community level. We are very grateful to The Funding Network-Toronto for helping us bridge the gap in funding between the United Way and the 2008 funding we received from CAMH which has kept the garden going.

Project Financial Report

<b>Project expense</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>Amount Received from Tides Canada</b>
Participants wages (6 months, 4 hrs/week, \$8.50/ hr, 14 people)	\$12,852	
Garden Coordinator salary (6 months, 3 days a week, \$18.50/hr)	\$10,800	\$10,800
Garden equipment	\$1,750.59	\$1,750.59
Snacks and occasional lunches	\$1,700	\$1,700
Office cost (\$400/month)	\$2,400	
Administrative costs (10%)	\$2,952	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$32,245.59</b>	<b>\$14,250.59</b>