

Goods donated to Community Hope Center: Jones sees CM students as "superstars" with small farm growth

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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BETHALTO - One member of the **St. Louis Regional Airport Board of Directors** is astounded at the efforts of local high school students.

Clyde Jones, who sits on the board, said he was approached by **Civic Memorial (CM) High School** student **Rickey Beck** at the beginning of last school year. Jones said Beck asked him if he and a few other students could use a parcel of land on the airport's property for farming. Jones said he was surprised at the request, and could not say no.

"It's really something for high school kids to do that today," Jones said. "They're superstars as far as I'm concerned. It was no problem for the board at all. They jumped at the chance. They felt the same way I did. 'Good heavens, this doesn't happen every day.'"

Beck and 14 other students utilized the three acre plot of land to grow onions, cucumbers, squash, tomatoes and "all sorts" of peppers, among other vegetables. The **Village of Bethalto** donated the water used for the vegetables and a local farmer assisted the students in getting the ground ready for use. Jones said the students began their crop in April, and recently harvested what they had grown.



Jones said the location was near the Fed-Ex building and the circle drive. He said it was in easy sight of the public as well as law enforcement to ensure it was well-protected. He said he did not want to see the efforts of these students ruined by marauders.

"It was perfect for us and them both," Jones said. "It wasn't a lot of land, but it was plenty for what they were doing."

Through this endeavor, Jones said he was able to get to know Beck. He described the student as very hard-working. He said he was "proud of him" for his efforts.

The produce harvested from the student-operated garden was given to the **Community Hope Center in Cottage Hills**.

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