



Gateway Greening Announces Plans for 2015 Community Garden Summit

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ST. LOUIS - Gateway Greening, a non-profit organization that educates and empowers people to strengthen their communities through gardening and urban agriculture, will host its 6th annual St. Louis Community Garden Summit on Feb. 21, 2015. The event will take place at Saint Louis University High School from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Both community and backyard gardeners are encouraged to attend the summit which will give participants the chance to network with other gardeners and those working in sustainable practices across the region, and hear presentations from national experts on community gardening, horticulture and community development. Pre-registration for the event is underway now at www.gatewaygreening.org/summit. The cost is \$12 for community gardeners and \$22 for members of the general public.



The 2015 event will feature a keynote address titled “Growing a Network of Deeply-Rooted, Self-Reliant and Resilient Community Gardens” from **Michael Buchenau, Executive Director of Denver Urban Gardens (DUG)**. Buchenau holds a master’s degree in landscape architecture from Harvard University. Prior to joining DUG, Buchenau managed numerous large-scale land planning and environmental assessment projects, including work in Mount Rainier, Yellowstone and Denali national parks. Working as the executive director of DUG for the past 20 years, Buchenau oversees all of DUG’s programs and operations, including garden site preservation, design and construction; garden organization, leadership training and community outreach; horticulture education; fund development; and fiscal management of the non-profit organization.

In addition to the keynote address, the 6th annual Summit will include a panel discussion titled “Growing Food for a Community in Need,” moderated by Mike Sorth, executive director of Gateway Greening. Panel members will include Kara Lubischer, Community Development Specialist in St. Louis for the University of Missouri Extension; Myra Rosenthal, chair of the Garden of Eden at the St. Louis Jewish Community Center; Jodi Smedley, Wellness Coordinator for the Wildwood Family YMCA and manager of the facility’s community garden; and Jean Vargo, Director of Pastoral Care and Social Ministry at Atonement Lutheran Church in Florissant, Mo. (Complete bios are below)

“We are excited to host our 6th annual Community Garden Summit,” said Mike Sorth. “Whether you’re a community gardener, or an amateur gardener looking to expand your backyard garden, this summit is a great opportunity to hear from horticulture experts and mingle with other gardeners. We encourage anyone with a vested interest in gardening to make plans to attend this event.”

For more information on the 6th annual Community Garden Summit or for information on Gateway Greening and its programs, visit www.gatewaygreening.org or call 314-588-9600.

ABOUT GATEWAY GREENING

[Gateway Greening](http://www.gatewaygreening.org) is a non-profit organization that educates and empowers people to strengthen their communities through gardening and urban agriculture. Gateway Greening has been working to provide creative, grassroots solutions to urban problems since 1984. Programs include supporting more than 200 community and youth-focused gardens across the St. Louis area through educational opportunities, garden supplies and technical assistance; urban beautification projects that enhance the St. Louis urban landscape; and the City Seeds Urban Farm, a 2.5 acre farm in downtown St. Louis that provides therapeutic horticulture and a jobs training program.

BIOGRAPHIES:

Kara Lubischer

Kara Lubischer is the Community Development Specialist in St. Louis for University of Missouri (MU) Extension. In this role, she develops community partnerships that link University resources and expertise with the needs and priorities of neighborhoods by fostering civic dialogue and establishing initiatives that address issues impacting the region including the integration of public health and community development, healthy food access priorities, organizational capacity building and leadership development through the annual Neighborhood Leadership Academy. Prior to joining MU Extension in 2007, Kara worked as a comprehensive planner for the St. Louis County Government Department of Planning. Before moving to St. Louis in 2005, Kara worked for a community development corporation in Cleveland as a community organizer, program director and trainer. Kara earned her BS in Social Work from Saint Louis University in 2000, and her Master's in Urban Planning, Design, and Development from Cleveland State University in 2005.

Myra Rosenthal

After a 33 year career, in which 18 of those years she worked two jobs, Myra Rosenthal married for the first time and thought she earned a well deserved restful retirement. Imagine her surprise to find, despite never having grown a vegetable in her life, that she now is the chair of the Garden of Eden at the JCC! She is scrambling to learn about plants, soil, insects, and managing both individual and volunteer groups while struggling to look like she knows what she is doing. Despite doing nearly everything backwards and upside down, she is busting her buttons that in the third year of operation The Garden of Eden contributed an astounding 1,700 pounds of organically grown fresh produce for the Harvey Kornblum Jewish Food Pantry. Myra is amazed in the multicultural friendships she has made and the willingness of people to assist. She shares her success with her loyal garden leaders, her supportive husband, and Gateway Greening.

Jodi Smedley

Jodi Smedley is a 14 year veteran of the Wildwood Family YMCA and the creator /founder of the Wild West Community Garden. She serves as Wellness Coordinator for the Wildwood Family YMCA and the manager of the Community Garden. The garden contains 55 raised beds and a large berm to grow fresh produce. The produce harvested from the berm is donated to local food pantries. Lucky's Market in Ellisville awarded a grant to further Jodi's efforts in health, wellness and healthy eating and Jodi is overseeing the building of a Children's Garden and outdoor classroom. Jodi develops

and nurtures business partnerships for the Y and promotes wellness programs in the Wildwood/Eureka area. Jodi received her Master Gardener certification in 2013 and works passionately to educate and inspire people about the joy and benefit of growing your own food. Jodi can be contacted at the Wildwood YMCA at jmedley@ymcastlouis.org.

Jean Vargo

Jean Vargo received her masters of divinity in 1981 and her masters of theology in pastoral counseling in 1991 from Luther Northwestern Seminary, St Paul, MN. She currently serves as directory of pastoral care and social ministry at Atonement Lutheran Church in Florissant, MO. As director of social ministry, Jean's passion is to help those who lack. The people she serves are on the street, the working poor, those in shelters, and those who frequent helping agencies. She oversees the community garden at Atonement, the red bag lunch program and many other relief ministries. As director of pastoral care and social ministry, it is her role to empower others in living their faith. Jean served as Chaplain in the National Guard for 26 years before retiring at the rank of full Colonel. There she served families and deployed military, established wounded soldier care programs, served in Desert Storm, and oversaw the Chaplain Program for the State of New York. Awards include the Bronze Star, Southeast Asia Medal, Meritorious Service Medal and Achievements medals. Jean has served parishes in Iowa, Minnesota, New Jersey, Michigan and Missouri. Growing up on a self-sufficient hobby farm, gardening and giving have been a part of her life from the earliest years, during which 4-H and FFA encompassed and shaped much of her life.