



# Children in YWCA after school program learn to garden with help from Sierra Club

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Something's growing around town

The Sierra Club, under the auspices of Jon Clark, and Three Rivers Co-Coordinator Virginia Woulfe-Beile and Christine Favilla, has been preparing children from the YWCA Child Enrichment Afterschool Program for some interesting gardening projects at the YWCA. The group coaxed the butterfly garden out of the overgrown west beds with the help of Youth Build, set up germination tables of vegetables and fruits at the Discovery Garden and have begun preparing planting boxes for the 4th Street vegetable garden. The Sierra Club also worked with the children to improve their knowledge about fresh and healthy nutrition in a program called *Eating a Rainbow* in which children literally eat their way through the assignment.

“Eating fruits and vegetables of a variety of different colors ensures that your body can get the best health benefits from our food. The rainbow of colors that our fruit and vegetables contain offer unique components that are essential to our health,” said Christine Favilla. “It’s healthy and fun!”

This Friday from 3:00-4:00 pm children will really dig into the adventure as they transplant seedling from the germination boxes to the 4th Street vegetable garden. Journalists welcome.

Other adventures in gardening planned for the 2015 growing season include helping at the new Lincoln Douglas Debate Site Garden, a rain garden, a native plant plot and a butterfly support project, in addition to tending the butterfly and vegetable garden throughout the season, and preparing healthy snacks from the harvest. According to Cindi Blackford, YWCA Afterschool Director, “Gardening and environmental education are great activities for children that foster an appreciation for living plants and the cycle of life, teach stewardship and responsibility and provides a tasty reward for the hard work. We are delighted that the children are developing their own green thumbs.” This gardening project is made possible through the generous support of the Alton Community Service League who provided funding for supplies and materials.

As the YWCA plans to take on more school-aged children for summer camp, the organization would welcome the additional donation of gently used pots, planters and watering cans for future plantings.