

Executive Summary

With the tremendous success of two sustainable schoolyard gardens and much encouragement from our local community, the Edible Peace Patch Project is currently seeking funds to develop three additional vegetable gardens for the at-risk youth who attend Title I schools on the south side of St. Petersburg. Bringing together school children, teachers, parents, college students, and community volunteers, these gardens demonstrate the benefits of community collaboration, urban farming, healthy eating habits, and education. The three proposed schoolyard gardens will be initiated and guided by the Edible Peace Patch Project, a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation dedicated to the development of sustainable urban agriculture, healthy food systems, and economic opportunity on the south side of St. Petersburg, Florida.

Statement of Need

The Objectives of the Schoolyard Gardens

The Edible Peace Patch Project intends to use the requested funds to develop three gardens for at-risk (Title I) schools in Pinellas County: Melrose Elementary, Campbell Park Elementary, and Gibbs High School. The funds will be used for the development and initiation of these projects: raw materials (mulch, top soil, and seeds), irrigation equipment, and volunteer coordination. These projects have been coordinated by our organization in consultation with the three principals and their teaching staff, all of whom have committed to these respective projects.

With these gardens, the schools and our organization intend to create a unique learning environment with a math- and science-based curriculum that “brings the classroom outside.” The gardens also teach the importance of healthy eating habits and environmental sustainability, and also provide a supplement to the school’s lunch budget. A vast majority of the students who attend these schools are on free lunch programs, determined by their family’s income level (below the poverty line), and schoolyard gardens are a healthier, less expensive alternative to current food choices in their cafeterias.

Concerning Melrose Elementary School: Our organization anticipates that the Melrose Elementary garden will require more attention than our previous projects because the school is built upon an old landfill, making the land a RCRA (Resource Conservation and Recovery Act) hazardous site and unsustainable for vegetation. Our staff is prepared to handle this by building above the ground, but has determined that the garden will need a more complex irrigation system and more maintenance than our other gardens.

Concerning Campbell Park Elementary: Campbell Park is one of the most economically disadvantaged schools in Pinellas County, where over 95% of the students participate in free

lunch programs supplied by the school's budget. Campbell Park closely resembles our previous school projects at Lakewood and Sanderlin Elementary Schools, and a similar garden would greatly benefit both the school, the students, and their families.

Concerning Gibbs High School: As our first project in a high school, we anticipate Gibbs to offer unique opportunities for the young adults who will eventually be able to sustain this garden on their own, with advice and minimal support from our organization. In addition to a math- and science-based curriculum, the high school students will be learning employable skills in planting, maintaining, and harvesting urban farms. The Edible Peace Patch Project aims to sell produce in St. Petersburg's Saturday Morning Market as well, and is eager to teach these young adults how to set up and manage an entrepreneurial venture, increasing their potential for employment upon graduation. The Edible Peace Patch Project also has access to kitchen space, where we expect to hold culinary classes in the near future, which adds another dimension to increasing the job skills of Gibbs High School students.

Schoolyard Gardens: An Ongoing Project

After much success and community encouragement, the Edible Peace Patch Project is looking to expand upon their development of two other schoolyard gardens at Lakewood and Sanderlin Elementary Schools. Our first garden was planted at Lakewood Elementary School in January of 2009, and began a successful partnership between the Pinellas County School system, Eckerd College, and the University of South Florida's St. Petersburg campus. With the successful cultivation of organic vegetables that had been chosen, planted, and cared for by the children, Lakewood Elementary celebrated its first Harvest Festival in June of 2009. Roughly three hundred children, parents, teachers, and community volunteers attended the event. The garden at Sanderlin Elementary celebrated a ribbon cutting ceremony in January of 2012 and expects to hold a similar Harvest Festival in May..

In 2011, the Edible Peace Patch Project established a board of directors and applied for 501(c)3 status. In addition to creating schoolyard gardens in Title I schools across St. Petersburg, the organization also anticipates developing a large urban farm on the south side of the city. The urban farm would create job opportunities and generate more produce to be sold to both the school system and the local community.

Serving the St. Petersburg Community

The schoolyard gardens bring together local volunteers, including parents and Eckerd and USFSP college students, with local at-risk schoolchildren to strengthen community ties. Throughout this cooperative experience, both the schoolchildren and the volunteers gain a knowledge of basic environmental ecology and sustainability, learn how to grow food, and learn the importance of a healthy diet. Our organization rejuvenates St. Petersburg by giving its

community a local and well-focused volunteer service opportunity alongside people of different ages and walks of life. These schoolyard gardens also celebrate community in the most fundamental of ways: by sharing together a meal made from the produce that the community has grown through its own labor and shared efforts. The Harvest Festival is the most rewarding highlight of what our organization brings to the St. Petersburg community.

The schoolyard gardens are also vital resources for at-risk families in our community, who have the highest levels of unemployment and poverty, struggle to pay for food, and are at the highest risk for nutrition-related health problems and for dropping out of school. These schoolyard gardens provide nutritious meals, aid dropout prevention by developing an alternative educational environment, and teach marketable skills in urban farming.

Community and Volunteer Involvement

The Edible Peace Patch Project has garnered an incredible amount of community and volunteer support with its first two schoolyard garden projects, and we expect to see our volunteer base continue to grow as we expand to more schools across the community. Developing these schoolyard gardens brings together parents, children, teachers, and community volunteers for a local, well-focused project. Our organization has also experienced a tremendous amount of support from Eckerd College, where students in the Environmental Studies program intern and volunteer on a regular basis to guide, assist, and educate the schoolchildren in caring for the gardens.

Most recently, in January of 2012, over one hundred volunteers attended our ribbon cutting ceremony for the garden at Sanderlin Elementary. This is more family involvement than any of the PTA meetings experienced throughout the school year. Our Harvest Festivals have fostered family involvement in youth education in unprecedented ways for Lakewood Elementary School, and we are confident that this success will grow with similar gardens in Melrose, Campbell Park, and Gibbs.

Sustainability Statement

EPP's Qualifications to Develop and Maintain Schoolyard Gardens

The Edible Peace Patch Project is spearheaded by Dr. Kent "Kip" Curtis, Ph.D. (U. Kansas, Environmental History), who has extensive experience in urban ecology, environmental studies, and environmental ethics and justice. The schoolyard gardens are also managed by two experts in Florida urban farming: Hugh McFarlane, a small business owner in our community with experience in environmentally sustainable farming, and Emanuel Roux, a chef and former restaurant owner with years of experience in community-supported agriculture. Our board of directors is comprised of nine individuals who have experience in maintaining farms and/or

advocating social justice in the St. Petersburg community. EPPP also collaborates extensively with Eckerd College's environmental studies department, where students have internship opportunities with Kip Curtis to assist with curriculum or garden evaluation.

Once the gardens are established, they are mostly self-sustaining and require few replenishing resources. EPPP help the school's community to maintain the garden, offering advice, consultations, and volunteers, and provides new mulch, topsoil, and organic fertilizer as they are needed.

Evaluation of the Schoolyard Gardens

One of the greatest benefits of these gardens is the opportunity to create a math- and science-based curriculum that is taught in the garden, an experience we call "moving the classroom outside." Professor Patrick Henry, a sociology professor at Eckerd College, has agreed to assist in developing an evaluation metric by which to measure learning in the garden during the spring semester. As a general plan, our organization will provide an entry survey to measure student knowledge across several of the targeted areas of knowledge, as well as in relationship to a broader set of sustainability and nutritional ideas. These areas will be measured again at the end of the semester and the data will be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of our anticipated student learning outcomes and where we and the partnered schools need to develop better teaching methods.

Long-term Funding and the Sustainability of Schoolyard Gardens

Our schoolyard gardens will be sustainable in the long term, and will require very little funding to replenish organic resources after the initial development of the garden. The Edible Peace Patch project intends to help the schools to sell some the produce that is grown to generate enough funding to sustain their garden. Produce will be sold at St. Petersburg's Saturday Morning Market at a free booth, and the profits will be distributed to the school gardens on an "as needs" basis. In addition, it is anticipated that EPPP and the schools will undertake some fundraising to support the gardens in subsequent years. The Edible Peace Patch Project will continue to supply advice and consultation, and help to coordinate wider activities with all of the schoolyard gardens and community garden projects around the city.

Other (Committed and Applied) Sources of Funding

The Edible Peace Patch Project has applied for other sources of funding for the schoolyard gardens at Melrose Elementary, Campbell Park Elementary, and Gibbs High School.

- Whole Kids Foundation - School Garden Grant (Melrose, Campbell Park): \$4000

- Awesome Tampa Bay (Melrose): \$1000
- Communities Putting Preventions to Work (CPPW): \$1200 (\$400 per school)
- Jamba Juice - It's All About the Fruits & Veggies (Melrose): \$500