

New garden to offer many community-friendly benefits

THE CHRONICLE
BY TODD LUCK

Latch Key, Inc. broke ground Friday on its East Winston Community Garden on Bramble Brook Lane, near Alpha And Omega Church.

The youth enrichment nonprofit is using land owned by the City of Winston-Salem and the church for the two-acre garden, which will have 52 rows of vegetables and another 20 rows of fruits. Plans also include adding benches, picnic tables, a playground and raised beds for easier access for the disabled.

A small portion of what the garden reaps will be sold at the nearby Rebecca's Store; the rest will be given away to residents of the community. The garden will also be used as a teaching tool.

"What we want to do with kids in this community is teach them how to eat healthy," said Latch Key CEO Michael Burton.

Burton was program director of a fatherhood initiative at the Greenville (S.C.) Head Start before he founded the organization in 1997. Latch Key offered students a safe haven.

"We wanted to give kids somewhere to go after school that was a safe, supervised environment and during the summer hours," said Burton, adding that the program started with 70 kids at a single site and grew to 500 young people at numerous sites in Greenville. The program also included a community garden, but one much smaller than the new site, Burton said.

At the urging of friends, Burton came to Winston-Salem in 2010 to see about offering Latch Key services here. He ended up finding a new home and transferring Latch Key to the Twin City, leaving a small presence in Greenville. The organization will host a summer enrichment program that will include entrepreneurship training and math and reading clubs at Alpha and Omega Church. Young participants will also be provided with a healthy lunch.

At last week's groundbreaking, Burton gave East Ward City Council Member Derwin Montgomery a quick tour of the site. Montgomery hopes that the project will



Photos by Todd Luck

Right: Alpha and Omega Church of Faith Bishop John Huntley, First Lady Deloris Huntley and Latch Key CEO Michael Burton break ground.

bring neighbors closer together.

"That's one of the great bi-products of having a community garden: you have people who are in the neighborhood who come together to make it happen," said Montgomery.

The garden truly is a community effort. The City's Community and Business Development Department helped Burton find the site and allowed him to use the city-owned portion of it. The Forsyth branch of the N.C. Cooperative Extension provided seeds and guidance. Alpha and Omega provided not only land but many of the dozens of volunteers who've worked to make the garden a reality over the past two months. Some of the volunteers are veteran gardeners who helped the church with its own garden, which has now become a part of the East Winston Community Garden.

Russell Johnson, an Alpha and Omega deacon, was a big help. The former construction worker grew up on a farm and has done a little bit of everything plant-related, including using donated bricks to create garden flower beds.

"It's been a big old blessing; it's going to help a lot of people, and when people come to see it, they're going to be proud to see it because it's going to be a nice place to look at," Johnson said.

Alpha and Omega First Lady Deloris Huntley envisions hosting a luncheon at the garden for the ladies of the church.

"It's going to beautify this community," she said.



Russell Johnson

"It's going to allow people to see what can be done."

The church-owned portion of the garden was originally purchased to be converted into a parking lot, but when money could not be raised to pave it, Bishop John Huntley began to plant a personal garden there. The garden soon became a church/community garden with 14 rows of mixed greens. Plans are now much grander for the space.

"When we had the small (garden), we had over 30-something families we (gave) mixed greens to," Bishop Huntley said. "They'd come up there and pick them; we'd give them the bags."

For years, Bishop Huntley said he'd dreamed of expanding the garden to the adjacent city-owned land. He's glad that the church and city's properties are now finally merged for a great purpose. The land has been

abundant for his church, he said, and he looks forward to seeing the bigger harvests to come.

Latch Key still needs the following items: lumber for six wheelchair accessible beds (2" x 12" x 8' (legs and ends), 2" x 12" x 12' (sides), 5-3/4" x 6" x 12' (bottom) and machined corners for six beds), garden tools, benches, picnic tables, landscape materials (shrubs, trees & flowers), soil, compost and hauling. Educational garden programs and volunteers for a project advisory board are also being sought. To volunteer or donate, call Burton at 336-483-7572.



Putney

Scott

Rountree

Residents to get chance to question police chief finalists

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

A public forum will be held Tuesday, May 21 from 4-5:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chamber to give local residents the opportunity to hear from the three finalists for the police chief job.

Deputy Police Chief Kerr Putney of the Charlotte-Mecklenberg Police Department; Deputy Police Chief Don W. Scott Jr. of the Greensboro Police Department; and Assistant Chief Barry Rountree of the Winston-Salem Police Department are the finalists, City Manager Lee Garrity announced yesterday.

Citizens will have 90 seconds to ask their question. Citizens who cannot attend can submit questions online at CityofWS.org, however, online submissions will be addressed only as time allows. Online questions must be submitted by 5 p.m. Monday, May 20.

The finalists were

selected through a national recruitment process managed by Developmental Associates LLC of Chapel Hill. A diverse pool of 44 applicants from small and large police departments throughout the United States applied for the position. This applicant pool was narrowed down to the three finalists through interviews; a comprehensive assessment center process in which more objective, systematic and accurate methods are used to recruit, screen and evaluate candidates; and background reviews.

The forum will be televised live on WSTV 13, channel 13 Time Warner Cable and channel 99 on AT&T U-verse.

Current Police Chief Scott Cunningham will retire at the end of June. The new chief will lead a department with 569 sworn officers and 166 civilian positions, and an annual budget of \$61.6 million.

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