

Project Sprout



2009 BRYAN FELLOW

Leighann Breeze

HOMETOWN: Durham, NC

MAJOR/DEGREE:
Psychology
Class of 2010

PROJECT TITLE:
Project Sprout

FACULTY MENTOR:
Penny Gordon-Larsen,
Nutrition

COMMUNITY PARTNER:
TABLE Ministries, Inc.

PROJECT LOCATION:
Orange County, NC

“Over the summer of 2009 Sprout ran for six weeks under the Carrboro-based hunger-relief nonprofit TABLE, teaching children of low income families the basics of gardening and the value of eating fresh, local, and healthy.”



Project Sprout is a garden-based nutrition education program that targets low-income elementary school children. Over the summer of 2009 Sprout ran for six weeks under the Carrboro-based hunger-relief nonprofit TABLE. The classes taught the basics of gardening and the value of eating fresh, local, and healthy snacks straight from Sprout’s garden and other local gardens.

Project Goals

1. Increase kids’ familiarity with fresh foods
2. Increase knowledge of fresh food availability beyond the supermarket
3. Teach kids the basics of growing fresh foods and provide them with means to begin their own garden
4. Raise children’s confidence in their ability to provide food for themselves through gardening
5. Raise preferences/affinity for fresh foods above that of processed foods

Since beginning my education at UNC, I developed a profound interest in nutrition and healthy living. This hobby developed from a personal lifestyle to a form of outreach after my experience with TABLE, a hunger relief nonprofit, in the summer of 2008. While packing backpacks with groceries to be sent home with low-income children, I found myself discouraged by the types of foods being put into the bags. I began to realize that many low-income families rely on high calorie, low nutrient food either because it is less expensive than fresh produce at the grocery store or because it is the

only type of food provided by private charitable organizations.

Two students in the public health department and I began the planning of a nutrition class for kids, linked to TABLE’s backpack program. We ran a six week trial program to work out the kinks in our lesson plan. After the classes, I began to think about the founding principles of TABLE and how it related to this fresh food education program. My main concern was that if we are running a program that teaches children to be self-sufficient, they will need to know how to get fresh foods without the help of their mom and dad. This led to the idea that TABLE could be a vehicle by which I could run a kids’ gardening class. Thus, the idea for Project Sprout was conceived.

By utilizing the educational resources of the University community and using TABLE as a vehicle for connection, project SPROUT ran a six-week garden-based nutrition education program in an effort to diminish the negative health effects of low socio-economic status. The lessons taught gardening skills, nutrition, and healthy snacking. The children who attended the classes showed a genuine appreciation, a desire to be involved, and an enthusiasm about the lessons we taught. Their eagerness to receive aid



made providing for them that much more fulfilling for us, as educators, donors, and role models.

Changes made in this summer session have served to build the foundation for future running of Project Sprout. Due to some unexpected scheduling changes, we provided educational services to significantly fewer children than we had planned. We were left with excess materials that will function as seeds to grow project sprout in the future. These supplies, along with some supplementary funding, will be enough to sustain the program for an additional six weeks. I trust that the community need will still be prevalent and have been assured that local community summer programs would be happy to recruit children to participate.



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