

Grow me something good

Dig Kids program matches teens with younger mentors to teach and learn garden lore

Five city young people are finding out about how to grow their own food, and passing that knowledge on.

“The Dig Kids — An Urban Farming Program for Youth” is beginning its first year. Put together by the Kingston Land Trust with a grant from the Columbia Foundation and Family of Woodstock, Dig Kids’ goal is to teach five teens about growing vegetables and learning farming practices, and encourage entrepreneurship, beautification, healthy eating and the pride that comes with harvesting something which started out as a just a seed. Helping with the program will be Jessica Clark, who’s tending the South Pine Street urban farm.

The five participants in the program will in turn mentor younger teens in the techniques and joys of small-scale agriculture, establishing a garden site at the Everette Hodge Community Center on Franklin Street. The five older kids will get a stipend during the program’s May-to-September duration and sell some of their produce. “This is a really important skill, growing food that the community wants,” said Kingston Land Trust Executive Director Rebecca Martin.

“It’s really important to have two things going on,” said Clark. “It has to be productive, and it has to be a tidy and beautiful space.”

Recently, we caught up with the Dig Kids at a meeting at the Hodge Center. We asked each why he or she wanted to join up and what he or she hoped to get out of the program. Their answers follow.

Brenda Olivo, age 16

Why did you want to be a Dig Kid?

“It’s a new experience and I wanted to try it.”

What do you hope to get out of the program?

“Knowing how to grow plants, because I want to save money. It’s a good thing to do.”

Matthew Brownlee, age 20

Why did you want to be a Dig Kid?

“I did a lot of [landscape] work in Georgia and I thought it was kind of fun, and I heard about helping the community with planting. It sounds fun and I’m really excited to do it.”

What do you hope to get out of the program?

“I hope to make a lot of stuff. I’m ready to make things — watermelon, green beans, carrots, anything that’s allowed to be made, I want to try it.”

Sydni Alonso, age 17

Why did you want to be a Dig Kid?

“I want to make a difference in my community and I want to learn something different with gardening. It seemed interesting.”

What do you hope to get out of the program?

“I’ll know how to survive in the Apocalypse! It’ll also teach me how to work with people and help the kids.”

Sandi Alonso, age 17

Why did you want to be a Dig Kid?

“I never knew how to garden, and I want to learn, so I can have my own one day when I have a house, kids, a husband, all that nice stuff.”

What do you hope to get out of the program?

“Knowledge — I want to know how to garden. Basically a learning experience. That’s what I hope to gain.”

Jessica Palmatier, 19

Why did you want to be a Dig Kid?

“I needed a job and I like working with younger individuals, so this is perfect.”

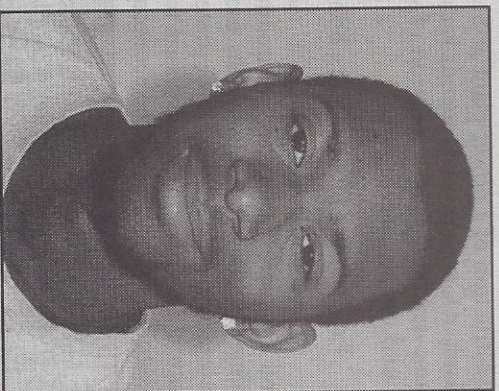
What do you hope to get out of the program?

“Some experience with gardening and working with young people and to have a good time.”

Dan Barton



Brenda Olivo.



Matthew Brownlee.



Jessica Palmatier.



Sandi Alonso.



Sydni Alonso.