

# CIF FEATURE STORY:

## Working Together to Build, Grow and Sustain a Healthy Lifestyle

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### Working Together to Build, Grow and Sustain a Healthy Lifestyle; Willow Creek Community Garden

**“Working together to increase the access to good food, provide a healthy lifestyle to participants through nutrition and physical activity and to build community relations by bringing people together of all ages, social-economic and cultural backgrounds within our community.”** This is the mission of the Willow Creek Community Garden (WCCG). WCCG, allows individuals the chance to learn and develop a healthy lifestyle, including individuals experiencing barriers, whether due to economic, age, or ability restrictions. The garden coordinator educates, supports and mentors gardeners, and builds relations with people in the community.

WCCG continues to develop and build community through the mentorship of new gardeners and their families, inclusive of all ages, ability, gender, income, and cultural backgrounds. **“We are continually working on building relationships with experienced and inexperienced gardeners, from youth to seniors to allow people of all abilities to participate and share knowledge together. It is so nice to see families bringing their children out to enjoy the garden and to participate,”** shares Pat Morley, WCCG Garden Coordinator. **“This project has increased the quality of life and wellbeing of our community. Members of the community are enjoying WCCG, not only from the healthy fresh food it provides, but from the social and educational events provided to the community.”**

The Willow Creek Community Garden is not only just about gardening, it is about supporting each other and building relationships and community. **“We have seen an increase in people volunteering and have been receiving greater support from The City of Meadow Lake and businesses in the area. Over the past few years we have had gardeners experience personal losses and health issues, and during these times the gardeners have felt at peace in the garden. They have been able to rely on the garden coordinator and members of the garden, whether for help with their garden plots or just to talk. The community garden is about more than just growing plants, it is about building relationships and having a place to enjoy and be at peace,”** shares Morley.

**“This project has given a new life to the Willow Creek Community Garden, the area and what it represents to Meadow Lake. Without the funds we received through the Community Initiatives Fund, this project would not be as successful as it is today,”** exclaims Morley. **“We hope this project will carry on through the years to offer everyone a chance to grow and develop a healthy lifestyle.”**

**These quotes from gardeners who have been involved with WCCG are just a few of the wonderful things said about how important the WCCG has been to them:**

“... I cannot express the gratitude that I feel to be a part of this wonderful garden community. The garden gives me a place to unwind and enjoy being outdoors; I can see the vast improvements that have been made here, they benefit all of us at the garden and also the community. ...”

- Gardener & volunteer at WCCG (former garden coordinator)

“... I spent a lot of time in Saskatoon doing cancer treatment, each time I come home (to Meadow Lake) I always stop and visit the community garden. I look forward to the chance to stop and visit the garden, to water, weed and dig in the dirt and visit with my friends. ... when the seeds start to sprout and grow, that gives us great happiness because there is LIFE! ...”

- Gardener & volunteer at WCCG

“When I moved into the City of Meadow Lake after living in the country for so many years, it was very difficult. ... Thanks to Willow Creek Community Garden, I was able to continue enjoying one of my most favorite activities. ... For me personally, the garden has helped keep me active and mobile. Its location is very accessible, yet there is minimal traffic and other noise. Most of all, it's an opportunity to visit with others and make new acquaintances. ...”

- Gardener & volunteer at WCCG



Photo Credit: Pat Morley