

Go International, Christian Activity Center Community Garden:

From adversity to triumph, the community garden's journey has been nothing short of inspiring. As of July, the garden faced the harsh reality of losing two entire sets of crops due to unrelenting dry weather throughout May. However, instead of succumbing to disappointment, the students embarked on their third attempt, determined to make a difference, even if they had to start from seed due to the circumstances.

The challenges didn't end with the weather. The garden also had to grapple with persistent weed infestations and the relentless drought affecting the produce. But adversity has a way of revealing their true potential, and the youth involved rose to the occasion.

The community garden is not just about cultivating crops; it's about nurturing the future. The food they grow there is an integral part of their youths' business program. The young participants take the produce and sell it in the community and at farmers' markets around St. Louis. To make healthy food more accessible, they're also in the process of setting up SNAP payment options.

But the success story doesn't stop there. The kids involved are not just learning to tend a garden; they are also discovering how to sustain themselves financially. In a stroke of creativity, they've developed unique products branded around East St. Louis. From fiery salsas like "Gomper Ghost Pepper" to "Roosevelt Reaper," to savory pickles, and now delightful fruit jams, these innovative creations are a testament to their ingenuity.

In September, the dedicated students took matters into their own hands. They constructed three new beds and are currently working on additional ones. They're also in the process of reviving some existing beds, and many already have seeds planted with signs of germination. The excitement is palpable as they eagerly anticipate the harvest.

And then there's the pumpkin plant. With sheer determination and care, they've nurtured it into something truly remarkable. As they approach their open house, the garden boasts a pumpkin that's grown to the size of a balloon. It's a symbol of resilience and growth, echoing the spirit of their community and its youth.

In the face of adversity, they've turned challenges into opportunities and losses into gains. The community garden has become a thriving hub of education, entrepreneurship, and, most importantly, hope.

