

SIUE Charter School Community Garden:

At the SIUE Charter School, the journey of the community garden has been one of growth, challenges, and transformation. With 45 beds at their disposal, it was clear that they had a great deal of potential, but bringing that potential to fruition required dedication and hard work.

As of July, the garden had seen 13 beds planted and cared for, with plans to plant an additional 6 beds with the help of dedicated volunteers. Tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers were flourishing, demonstrating that the team was on the right track. However, the abundance of beds presented a challenge – keeping up with maintenance proved to be a daunting task.

In the midst of this undertaking were a few dedicated individuals who were instrumental in the garden's success. Dr. Zuercher, along with her intern Hannah, Carolyn Stewart, a teacher from the charter school, and Aaron Vance, another teacher, poured their energy and time into the project. Their commitment and hard work set the tone for what would come next.

The school and garden had a clear purpose – to provide fresh produce to students, staff, and even patients/clients from the We Care Clinic. As the new school year began, Carolyn and Aaron stepped up to lead the garden's efforts, adding fresh perspective and enthusiasm.

In September, a significant update took place when they integrated a new course on Human and Environment interaction into their curriculum. This step not only expanded the garden's educational role but also gave the students a deeper understanding of the importance of sustainable practices.

The team also embarked on a mission to reclaim some of the overgrown beds that had been neglected throughout the season. Their efforts paid off as they harvested jalapenos and tomatoes, turning them into delicious salsa for their community of students. Looking ahead, they planted seeds to experiment with fall gardening, setting the stage for a strong start in the spring.

The SIUE Charter School's community garden has grown in size and purpose. It is not only a source of fresh, sustainable produce but also a place where students learn about the environment and the benefits of hands-on engagement.

