

Master gardener at West Broadway Farmers Market

Written by By Shaina Brassard, West Broadway Business and Area Coalition
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Starr Carpenter is a grower, newspaper editor, West Broadway Farmers Market vendor, private gardening maintenance consultant and entrepreneur. She moved to Minneapolis two and a half years ago from rural Isanti County, where for five years she worked as Coordinator of the Master Gardener Program for Chisago County. Since she arrived, Carpenter's been very active in the local and healthy foods community, which she sees as brimming with opportunity, especially on the Northside. We sat down in her bountiful garden at her North Minneapolis home and talked about the business of healthy food on the Northside.

Shaina Brassard: What's your professional background and how did it lead you to be involved in healthy food access on the Northside?

Starr Carpenter: I'm a grower, I was trained as a grower, but I've also spent many years in the food service industry, managing restaurants, school food service, senior nutrition programs, and then I did six years of sales with Sysco Food Service. So I have that whole background of working with distributors and knowing how that system works. I think that when we're talking about changing our food system, the people involved have that knowledge of all the parts, because it is very much a system that is made up of a lot of moving parts. Food is grown, a broker buys it, it's transported to a warehouse where it's washed and packaged...before it ends up in the grocery store it has gone through many hands, so many that I'm surprised it still looks like food. So by the time it gets to the consumer, that food isn't really fresh. And every time someone handles the food they have to make a profit on it. So the secret to local foods is understanding the whole system, and what parts can you eliminate.

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