

Park Board gets \$10,000 for JD Rivers' Children's Garden

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The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) was recently awarded a \$10,000 grant by the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA's) Grow Your Park program—made possible through a gift from the J.R. Albert Foundation—to support the JD Rivers' Children's Garden, located north of Glenwood Avenue in Theodore Wirth Park.

Through programming at the garden, children and teens plant, weed, water, compost, harvest, prepare, sample and take home garden produce from late-May to late-September. Grow Your Park funds will be used to address the needs and wishes of 2010 program participants and will focus on three main areas: perennial plants and crops, garden infrastructure and new intergenerational programming.

Children involved in last year's programs expressed strong interest in growing and eating fruit. Grant funding will increase perennial berry crops such as strawberries, which can be harvested early in the growing season and raspberries for the end of the season. It will also allow for the planting of fruiting shrubs such as blueberries and gooseberries.

"Staff are excited about being able to add more fruit bearing plants to the JD Rivers' Children's Garden," said Mary Lynn Pulscher, Environmental Education Coordinator. "The kids really wanted to grow mangos but I'm sure they'll be happy with strawberries and blackberries."

Plans also include improvements to the garden's infrastructure. Installing a hoop house, cold frames and raised beds will make it possible to begin planting earlier in the spring to create a longer growing season. Extending water lines will allow for use of under utilized garden space.

Grant funding will also facilitate an intergenerational program series in which parents and grandparents work with youth to create jams and salsa from the food the youth grow in the garden. Together they will share healthy eating education and possibly inspire families to garden at home.

"Providing extended education about healthy eating to Minneapolis youth and their families takes the Park Board's green initiatives to another level," said MPRB President John Erwin. "I'd like to thank the NRPA and the J.R. Albert Foundation for providing the opportunity to reach a broader audience with education about healthy lifestyles."

The Park Board is one of 10 agencies in the U.S. to receive a 2011 NRPA Grow Your Park grant.

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The National Recreation and Park Association is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing park, recreation and conservation efforts that enhance quality of life for all people. Through its network of 20,000 recreation and park professionals and citizens, NRPA encourages the promotion of healthy lifestyles, recreation initiatives, and conservation of natural and cultural resources. For more information, visit www.NRPA.org . For digital access to NRPA's flagship publication, Parks & Recreation, visit www.parksandrec-magazine.org