



Springfield Urban Agriculture Coalition
823 W. State Street #8
Springfield, MO 65806
417.429.0999

May 1, 2014

Tara Slaughter
Darr Family Foundation
2870-D S. Ingram Mill Rd.
Springfield, MO 65804

Dear Ms. Slaughter and members of the Darr Family Foundation,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a proposal for funding to expand Springfield Urban Agriculture Coalition's Dig-In R-Twelve (DIRT) programming and outreach for the future. Enclosed, please find our proposal and required attachments that describe and support our "**DIRT Digs Deeper**" request. With our strong record of success, multiple partnerships with organizations in the community, and our commitment to promoting accessibility to healthy food for members of our community, we are well positioned to expand our services, reaching even more children, families and neighborhoods. If you have any questions or need clarification regarding our proposal, please feel free to contact me.

With gratitude,

Sheila Nichols, Executive Director
Springfield Urban Agriculture Coalition
Sheila@springfielduac.org
417-773-2033

B. Summary of Springfield Urban Agriculture Coalition

The Springfield Urban Agriculture Coalition (SUAC) promotes healthy lifestyles and environments through hands-on education about the production and the consumption of locally-produced, natural, healthy foods. We do this through two primary programs: the Dig In R-Twelve (DIRT) program, which manages nine school yard gardens and ensures delivery of garden-oriented curriculum to K-12 students in Springfield Public Schools; and 2) the Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT) program, which places interns on small, local farms where they learn directly from farmers about best practices for sustainable food production. SUAC also partners with several organizations in Springfield and across the Ozarks to provide a wide array of other educational services to the community, such as gardening workshops (MU Extension), cooking with local foods workshops (Springfield-Greene County Health Department), hosting summer camps at DIRT gardens (YMCA), and hosting volunteer days at our gardens for local universities and businesses. You can learn more about Springfield Urban Agriculture Coalition at our website, www.springfielduac.org.

DIRT Digs Deeper

A proposal by the Springfield Urban Agriculture Coalition

Introduction:

To help ensure health and well-being for people of all ages in the Springfield community, it is important to teach children to make healthy food choices and to develop the skills to grow fresh, healthy produce. In addition, as an element of our community's battle against poverty, teaching children how to grow their own food can address food security challenges for individuals and families across our community. SUAC aims to address these issues through one of its two flagship programs, Dig In R-Twelve (DIRT), which 1) maintains nine schoolyard gardens in elementary, middle and high schools within the R-12 Springfield Public School District; and 2) provides volunteer and paid staffing to work with public school teachers to develop and deliver garden-based lessons that fulfill state core learning goals.

The DIRT program, operating since 2010, is well established and is also continually undergoing improvement to serve the unique needs of each school and neighborhood where DIRT gardens are located. We propose to expand—to “Dig Deeper”—the DIRT program by addressing critical food security needs in our community with ***year-round food production*** through the expansion of our summer programming in more of our DIRT gardens. Many of our gardens are underutilized in the summer months when school is not in session but vegetable production is at its peak. In addition to maintaining the gardens, so they are in good shape for students returning in August, we want to ensure that the food production potential of each garden is realized and the bounty is distributed to members of those neighborhoods. The expansion of our programming will add staffing costs for the additional coordination of these programs for the expanded use of the existing gardens. This additional staffing responsibility is a new expense for which we are seeking funding from the Darr Family Foundation and other foundations, organizations, and our own fundraising events.

Our main constituent group is the R-12 Springfield Public School District, including its students, teachers and administrators. We are specifically targeting the children and their families in those districts to ensure that they have access to local, fresh, healthy food, either harvested directly from DIRT school gardens or grown in their own backyard gardens with skills learned in DIRT school gardens.

Goals and Objectives:

Expand use of DIRT gardens through the summer months to ensure that as much food as possible is produced and harvested from each garden AND is distributed to children and volunteers who work in that garden and to the members of that neighborhood. Currently, three gardens are used throughout the summer by either the YMCA Local Sprouts program or by summer school students.

- We will activate *five* DIRT gardens in Summer 2014, and *four* additional gardens in Summer 2015, utilizing all *nine* gardens throughout the year.
- We will engage an additional 200 children in summer programs (via SPS summer school, YMCA's Local Sprouts, Summerscape, and other programs with partner organizations in the community) in Summer 2015.
- We anticipate producing an average of 750 pounds of produce from each of our gardens that will be distributed to children and their families helping in the gardens and living in those neighborhoods.

Activities Planned and Timetable:

- **In summer 2014**, we will host for the 4th summer in a row the YMCA's Local Sprouts program, a “Farm to Child Collaborative,” in partnership with the Healthy Living Alliance, where children enrolled in YMCA summer camps spend one day a week during an eight week period working in the Midtown garden and at the Farmer's Market of the Ozarks' Community Garden to maintain and harvest food crops. The Summerscape program at Drury will also host gardening activities at the Midtown Garden. Field Elementary will be hosting garden-themed summer classes during the month of June, so those children will be maintaining and harvesting from those gardens as well. Delaware Elementary uses their DIRT garden for their summer school classes also.
- **During the 2014-15 school year**, the DIRT Coordinator will work with Springfield Public Schools, the YMCA, Springfield Community Gardens, and Farmer's Market of the Ozarks to expand opportunities for programming in three additional gardens for the following summer. This will require securing a larger volunteer base for maintenance and programming.

- In both summers and throughout the school year, produce from the gardens will be given first to the children and volunteers who work in the garden. SUAC staff and volunteers will harvest any additional food items on a weekly basis and coordinate with existing community programs such as the Backpack program, Care to Learn, Every Child Promise, Healthy Pantry Collaborative, Springfield Community Gardens, and others to ensure distribution to families in need in the local neighborhoods.

Other Organizations involved:

SUAC already partners with multiple organizations in the Springfield community who will be instrumental in our efforts to expand summer programming, production and distribution including, but not limited to:

Springfield Public Schools	Community Foundation of the Ozarks
YMCA and Healthy Living Alliance	Community Partnership of the Ozarks
Drury University	Farmers Market of the Ozarks
Missouri State University	Springfield-Greene County Health Department
Mercy Foundation—Force for Good grant	Americorps and Americorps VISTA

Long-term sources of funding

The 2014-15 school year will be SUAC's first year not operating under the funding umbrella of a large grant from the Missouri Foundation for Health. Funding for SUAC and the DIRT program will be continued through and beyond 2014-15 primarily through additional, sponsorships and donations, grants, and an annual major fund raising event. Americorps and Americorps VISTA programs will continue to provide additional staff for program development, public relations, and other service to the organization.

Accomplishments of Organization

- 2010-2011 School Year: Taught 450 students
- 2011-2012 School Year: Taught 850 students
- 2012-2013 School Year: Taught 1200 students
- 2013: cultivated 5000+ pounds of produce
- Summers 2011-13: Engaged 1167 children in YMCA Local Sprouts program
- 875 community volunteers donating tools, construction materials, and over 3800 hours
- 100% increase in Garden Teacher volunteers, which provides two Garden Teachers per garden for each semester (In 2011, we had one staff member teaching all classes; '12—6, '13—12, '14—14)
- In 2013, CRAFT has 13 participating farms each staffed with at least one apprentice farmer

DIRT was created for the students of Springfield, but, as a byproduct of that desire to reach students, we have been able grow in ways that also serve the community in less tangible ways. We have garnered community enthusiasm for urban agriculture, provided internships and garden-teacher volunteer opportunities that inspire individuals in their career growth and personal development. We have formulated an open and collaborative dialogue about how organizations in the community can expand this vision of producing and consuming local foods in an urban environment. We had had over 875 volunteers involved, some as garden teachers or assistant garden teachers, and some as community members, parents, and university students assisting with garden maintenance on volunteer workdays. Participation in DIRT gardens, whether it is on a weekly basis working with students or on a one-time or intermittent basis to help with maintenance, also helps spread awareness about the importance of locally grown, fresh produce, and about the importance of teaching school children how to grow their own food.

Purpose of Grant

We are requesting \$10,000 to supplement the operating costs of the DIRT program as it relates to the expansions described in this proposal. One of the major expenses of the operating costs is the salary of a paid DIRT Coordinator who maintains weekly communication among all DIRT program principals, school teachers, garden teachers, other volunteers, and Springfield Public Schools administration and grounds maintenance staff. The Coordinator would also build community partnerships to expand the summer use of additional DIRT gardens and ensure distribution of harvested produce out to the families in these neighborhoods. The DIRT Coordinator would also be responsible for recruiting, training and mobilizing volunteers who maintain the gardens, help deliver programming, and help distribute food. Funds from this grant would cover 1/3 of the DIRT Coordinator's annual salary.

The annual program budget for DIRT is \$50,495, but we intend to increase the annual budget of the project to \$76,168 by bringing on a salaried DIRT Coordinator. This school year we are on target to see about 1,615 school children with about 24,188 total contact hours (the total amount of time that we see all of our individual students). With a small increase in our annual budget, we will increase by leaps and bounds the number of students and families we can reach through expanded summer programming served by a larger volunteer base, and also increase the food production, harvest and distribution. The cost per student contact hour will certainly go down from the current cost of \$2.09 per student.

Evaluation

Expected results during funding period:

- In Summer 2014, we expect to reach at least 10% more students than we served last summer, and by Summer 2015, we will reach 20% more than in 2013 through increased participation in SPS summer school use of the DIRT gardens, Local Sprouts, and other summer programs.
- We will harvest on average 1000 pounds of produce from each active garden that will be distributed to children, volunteers and needy families in the community.
- We will increase our volunteer base for garden maintenance and programming by 10%.

How do you measure return on funding investment?

- Number of students we make contact with, as well as contact hours.
- Number of volunteers participating in the program.
- Quantity (in pounds) of food that was harvest and distributed to the community.
- Currently, a Drury student intern is developing surveys and metrics to evaluate participants' changes in knowledge and attitudes about gardening.

Data or information currently available on effectiveness of existing programs

[see Accomplishments Section, page 4]

How will results or information from the program described in this grant request be used and/or disseminated?

The results will be used to improve programming and to seek additional and ongoing funding for SUAC and its programs. The information will also be included in SUAC's Annual Report and on our website. We will also take every opportunity to attend local, regional and national conferences where we can present the accomplishments of our DIRT program in general, and the results of these specific initiatives related to summer programming, production and distribution. Our experiences can help inform and inspire other communities and school districts who want to establish similar programs. DIRT results are also widely disseminated through our Americorps VISTA partner organization; VISTA considers DIRT to be a model for how other communities could launch a schoolyard garden program.

Attachments

Mission Statement:

The Springfield Urban Agriculture Coalition's (SUAC) mission statement: SUAC will promote healthy lifestyles and environments through hands-on education about the production and the consumption of locally-produced, natural, healthy foods.

1. A copy of the original IRS determination letter indicating 501(C)3 tax exempt status
2. Mission Statement (see above)
3. Board of Directors
 - a. Wendy Anderson, President of the Board, Professor and Chair of Environmental Programs, Drury University
 - b. Tiffany Akre, Treasurer
 - c. Katrina Murr, Secretary, Author, MFA student at Warren Wilson University
 - d. Rob Corliss, Chef, Owner of All Things Epicurean (ATE), a culinary consulting company
 - e. Curtis Millsap, Owner of Millsap Farms
 - f. Janell Bagwell, Principal of Eugene Field Elementary School
 - g. Jason Greer, M.D., Cox Medical Center
 - h. Melissa Millsap, Owner, Urban Roots Farm; Executive Committee member for the Food Policy Council
 - i. Adam Millsap, Owner, Urban Roots Farm
 - j. Lucy Howell, Marketing Account Manager, Departika
 - k. Patricia Zachary, retired CPA; General Federation of Women's Clubs
4. Names and Qualifications of Key Staff
 - a. Sheila Nichols, Executive Director
Sheila joined SUAC in mid-April. She owns a small farm in Nixa and is a long-time advocate for local food and healthy communities. She works part time at Farmers' Market of the Ozarks, is a founding member of the Ozarks Regional Food Policy Council, founding member of Food CORE, and former Coordinator of Springfield Food Day Celebration.
 - b. Katherine Minx, Development Coordinator:
Kat graduated from Hannibal-LaGrange College in 2006 with a degree in Communication Arts with an emphasis in PR and earned her English teaching certificate from Missouri State in December of 2012. She joined SUAC to use her skills as a teacher and passion for community development to help children learn how to grow their own organic food and help the community make long-term, informed lifestyle decisions about health and environmental stewardship.
 - c. Ben Utne, DIRT Project Coordinator:
Ben, a Springfield, MO native made it to SUAC by way of his love for gardening and his experience in a start-up environment. He was a founding member of Springfield-based video game developer, Black Lantern Studios. After trading in computer programming, he decided to become our DIRT Coordinator.

