

# GEORGIA MASTER GARDENER EXTENSION VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Learn

Serve

Grow



## Spotlight: Health Benefits of Gardening

Located at the old Fairmont High School site, the Healthy Life Community Garden (HLCG) is a major positive asset to the local community. HLCG began with the intent to provide healthy food options to residents of Griffin, Georgia, who were living in an identified food desert with little access to fresh produce. In 2013, community leaders from Griffin Housing Authority, UGA Griffin, Spalding County, and the City of Griffin came together to address the needs of the neighborhoods in Fairmont, a high-risk community. A community garden was proposed as beneficial to the community.

MGEVs and the community came together to demolish an old school and create a functional garden for growing fresh food. All residents in the area of the garden, as well as Spalding County in general, are welcome to grow vegetables in the garden by working one of the twenty-one individual raised beds and/or participating in the 12,000 square-foot community area. Children's programs, such as Junior Master Gardener programs, summer reading programs, and special events, like Halloween and Spring Fling, offer social gatherings at the garden throughout the year.

There are numerous benefits from this garden. Many people who have little gardening skills or have not have interaction with UGA Extension have been reached and now know of this resource. MGEVs have been able to put into practice what they learned in their classes. Volunteering with the garden has created an awareness of the economic disparity in the community and knowledge of the existence of a food desert in the area. In recognition of the wonderful success and impact this project has had on the community, Griffin Housing Authority received the 2014 National Award of Excellence in Program Innovation for the Healthy Life Community Garden project by the National Association of Housing and Re-Development Officials (NAHRO). It has already led to the creation of a second and third effort in similar neighborhoods.

Healthy Life Community Garden  
Griffin, GA  
Served by MGEVs from Spalding County



### 2015 Project Contributions:

Volunteer Hours: 185  
Planning Meetings: 10  
Presentations: 5  
Special Events: 2

*Special thanks to MGEVs working in the Healthy Life Community Gardens!*

The gardens have been a labor of love, bringing together people from all parts of society for the common goal of improving the wellbeing of the community. From the expertise shared by MGEVs to the children in the neighborhood learning and playing in the garden, the garden has had a positive impact on the community. All are proud of the great gains that have been made.



The Georgia Master Gardener Extension Volunteer Program prepares volunteers to support UGA Cooperative Extension in delivering gardening information to Georgia's citizens and communities. Since 1979, Master Gardeners and UGA Extension have helped Georgians become healthier, more productive, financially independent and environmentally responsible.