

Community Garden Started by Nuestra Casa Volunteers

Story by: Jennie McGhan Date Published to Web: 5/28/2009



Credit: Photo by Jennie McGhan/Daily Sun News

Nuestra Casa's Women's Justice Circle is working on a community garden to provide an activity for families and youth in Sunnyside. Members of the group include (L-R) Angelica Raya, Nuestra Casa's Blanca Bazaldua, Rosie Lopez, Rafaela Sanchez and Mago Martinez. Also participating in the project are Luz Balderas, Maria Mora, Guadalupe Santana, Nuestra Casa's Sister Grace Diaz and Emma Bueno.

A community garden is taking shape behind Sunnyside's Seventh Day Adventist Church.

The idea was grown from a group of women involved in Nuestra Casa's Women's Justice Circle.

The ladies, according to Nuestra Casa Community Outreach Coordinator Blanca Bazaldua, worried about the number of activities for families and children.

She said the women were very concerned for youth between the ages of 12 and 16 because those youngsters are neither young enough for daycare nor old enough to work.

"The women have a growing concern for those youngsters because they feel a lack of activities and supervision puts the kids at risk of becoming involved in gang activities," said Bazaldua.

She said the women, who have families of their own, wanted to provide an activity that serves both families and youngsters of the community.

The group took the initiative to plan a community garden. Bazaldua assisted and utilized Nuestra Casa's relationship with Rev. Larry Mays to gain support from the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

"The church was excited about the idea...they ran irrigation lines to the area where the garden is being grown and the church rototilled the land," said Bazaldua.

She said the Women's Justice Circle last week began planting the garden with a coordinated effort from family, friends and fellow community members.

"We got a little dirty, but we had fun and there is still plenty of land for more plantings," Bazaldua stated, explaining the garden is something for the entire community to take part in.

"It's a huge piece of land and anyone can join in the efforts of cultivating the garden," she explained further.

In addition to the garden, the group is also working on efforts to provide an art program during the summer months. That program will take place at Nuestra Casa.

"They are developing ideas for several summer programs, such as games and activities the whole family can participate in," said Bazaldua.

Currently, the group meets to work on the garden Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 6:30 and 8 p.m. She said anyone in the community can join in the caring and planting of the garden.

Vegetables and flowers have been planted so far. Bazaldua said the crop will be divided up among those participating in the garden efforts, and food items will also be provided to Lower Valley community members in need.

The group's main focus, however, is to better grow the community around them, according to Bazaldua.