

Let's Grow Together

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Food insecurity, as defined by the USDA, is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.



In Shelby County, food insecurity is directly correlated with incomes below \$40,000 per year for families. This also is directly related to individuals with no diploma and the childhood poverty rate. The rate of food insecurity in Shelby County is 13.4% which equals 5,970 residents. Of these residents, 34% do not qualify for federal assistance programs because they are greater than 185% above poverty level. Sixteen percent of these residents are between 130-185% poverty level and qualify for programs such as reduced school meals and WIC. Fifty percent are below 130% and qualify for SNAP or free school meals. The 50% also includes a large amount of seniors. At this rate, the average meal must cost less than \$2.28. What meal can you buy for that amount besides the Dollar Menu at McDonald's? Let's Grow Together sees a great need in Shelby County for food assistance programs that target the more than 2000 residents that need food assistance, but don't qualify for federal assistance programs.

With the development of the Shelbyville Community Garden, it is our vision to address these issues of food insecurity in Shelby County. We have created a community garden to produce food for those hungry in body and a place of beauty for those hungry in spirit. It will be a place where residents struggling to put healthy, fresh food on their table can be assured that fresh produce will be available for their meals. It will also add educational value, sharing gardening knowledge for adult and child. It will promote self-sufficiency, providing healthy and productive activities for our youth and a greater sense of community in Shelby County. It will be a place where the local neighborhood can take pride in ownership. Green thumbs can display their talents and anyone who gives will be able to take. By working together, we can help feed each other. We can offer dignity and respect by allowing individuals and families to work for food they bring home to their table. It gives peace of mind by offering a balanced diet for proper nutrition.

We have been lucky to be selected as a partner in Project 2322, part of Brandywine Creek Farms. They are graciously providing all the materials and the initial start-up of the garden. We have also partnered with Habitat for Humanity, who donated one of their lots for the garden. Other partnerships we have forged during this process include Healthy Shelby County, Master Gardeners, Purdue Extension and the Shelby County Drug Free Coalition. We have had numerous other agencies step forward to offer help with volunteers and donations.

In addition to creating a community garden, our Leadership Shelby County project group has inadvertently formed a coalition of community members and organizations who are dedicated to helping increase access to healthy food in Shelby County and who will continue to bring light and find solutions for our county.

For more information on Let's Grow Together, contact Alyse Deutsch at acdeutsc@gmail.com or (317) 796-8015.