



Seeds of Hope food share makes fresh food more accessible

STORY PICKED UP BY 26 AFFILIATES NATIONWIDE

(IL, FL, NC, GA, WI, SC, ID, NY to name a few)

Fitting squash, scallions, beans and beets in a 2-foot cardboard box is no trouble. But adding in an outsize head of napa cabbage? That's where the system starts to break down.

Jen Loui of [Seeds of Hope farm](#) arranges and rearranges the produce to accommodate the cabbage's crinkly leaves, but they are just too prolific. Jake Smith, the farm manager, tells the small assembly line of volunteers that the cabbage will have to be bagged separately.

Smith oversees the community-supported agriculture farm behind St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Spanish Lake. Throughout the growing season, two to three dozen different crops will be harvested from the three-quarters-acre lot donated by the church.

Seeds of Hope takes a unique approach to the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model, which typically involves customers purchasing a subscription for a regular yield of a farm's offerings.

Each Seeds of Hope farm box has a market price of about \$20; sponsors pay \$28 to subsidize shares for low-income members. For members with incomes at less than 125% of the federal poverty level — about \$32,000 a year for a family of four — an income-tiered share costs \$12. The Double Up Food Bucks program for food stamp recipients can bring that down to \$10.

The farm is one of 22 projects under the umbrella of the [Community Action Agency](#) of St. Louis County, a federally funded organization focused on ending poverty. It started in 2012 as a way to "increase physical accessibility and economic access to fresh food," said Randy Tempel, the community garden coordinator.

In Spanish Lake, 19% of residents fall below the poverty line, though CSA members who buy subsidized farm shares can be from any part of St. Louis County.

Each Thursday from late May to late October, customers can pick up their boxes at the farm or the Community Action Agency in Overland. Tempel also drops off several sponsor boxes for employees of the Missouri Botanical Garden.

The nonprofit farm partners with the University of Missouri-St. Louis to host cooking classes and community dinners at nearby Bethany-Peace United Church of Christ. UMSL also works with the **Hazelwood School District** to take students on field trips to learn about small-scale farming.

"It's a way to pair production and education and increase supply and demand at the same time," Tempel said. "If people know more about fresh fruits and vegetables, they'll demand them more often."

Zora Guthrie already requests carrots for snacks at home. The 6-year-old also is a cabbage fan.

"It's so sweet," she said Wednesday as she helped her grandmother, Deborah Lewis, clean and package vegetables. Zora has been accompanying Lewis to the farm all summer.

She has the routine down: "After we pull the plants out of the dirt, we wash them and put them in the bags. Then we wash our hands."

Zora and her mother live in the same North County apartment complex as Lewis, and the three generations share a food box. As a regular volunteer, Lewis receives hers for free. SEE COMPLETE STORY BY FOLLOWING LINK.

https://www.stltoday.com/business/local/seeds-of-hope-food-share-makes-fresh-food-more-accessible/article_e668bccca-a00a-5473-99e8-e40a5892a599.html#1

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