

Longville Community Garden attracts active seniors

by Gail DeBoer
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Community gardens in Longville and Remer have tapped into the skills, expertise and enthusiasm of dozens of residents, many of them retirees, to the benefit of their respective towns and surrounding areas.

It's only been a year since the Longville Community Garden was established, but what a year it's been.

Longville previously had a garden, but it closed several years ago. In the interim, many area residents realized they not only wanted but needed a community garden.

In March 2021 Whitehead approached residents about re-establishing the garden. That unleashed a burst of pent-up energy as Carol Johnson, Dave Owen and Paul Harwig stepped forward.

"Dave, Paul and I ran with it," Carol jokes. "We recruited community volunteers, we parceled out responsibilities and from March to June, we built the

garden!"

The first step was finding a location. Harwig, a Wabedo Township supervisor, took a recommendation from Wabedo Town clerk Barb Anderson and arranged for a plot of township land just outside of Longville to be leased at no charge. The Longville Lions agreed to sponsor the garden and signed the lease.

At first the garden measured 100-by-80 feet. With additions, it soon grew to 100-by-200 feet. Now there are 12 12-by-12 foot ground plots, four round raised beds, 15 raised beds in two sizes; four handicapped raised beds, four food shelf plots; and a children's garden.

Rental fees range from \$25 to \$55 per season, with 'social grants' for those who can't afford the fee. In 2021, more than 60 people signed up for garden space, plus others who were placed on a waiting list.

Volunteer Dave Owen engineered and built a sophisticated, extensive, fully automatic underground watering system. Other amenities include secure fencing and a shed with garden tools.



Volunteers were still working on beds and fencing at the Longville Community Garden when this photo was taken by a low-flying drone. Photos submitted

ties include secure fencing and a shed with garden tools.

Everyone who rents a plot gets a manual with rules, regulations and procedures. Signage spells out general rules, garden hints and educational information (e.g., no picnics, no

loud music, no pets).

"The raised beds are set up for wheelchairs, and there's a handicapped parking area," Carol elaborated. "Next spring the children's garden will be open."

Volunteers tend four big food shelf plots that generate produce for the

deners had never gardened before. The rest had dabbled or hadn't done it for some time.

Gardening has turned out to be as much a social activity as anything else.

"Some people just wanted to talk to others, be outside in the sun, and

along their dogs but had to leave them in their cars. That led to the idea for a dog park that will open this spring.

The garden's first summer was excellent, generating bumper crops of tomatoes, potatoes, corn, squash, pumpkins and other vegetables — even hops for making beer. Many gardeners also raised flowers to attract pollinators.

Plans for 2022 include expanding the garden with eight more 12-by-12 ground plots, five raised beds and four more round beds; adding a beehive pollinator area; planting an orchard; and adding a dog park and a half-mile walking path. The group will be applying for grants to fund the expansion plans.

While all garden plots are reserved for 2022, on the off-chance that someone drops out or someone wants to get on the list for 2023, call Carol at (612) 308-4860.



In 2021, the Longville garden measured 100-by-80 feet but with additions, soon grew to 100-by-200. Plans in 2022 are to expand the garden even more.

Longville Area Food Shelf. Carol estimates about 75 percent of last year's gar-

deners had never gardened before. The rest had dabbled or hadn't done it for some time. Gardening has turned out to be as much a social activity as anything else. "Some people just wanted to talk to others, be outside in the sun, and

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The 100-by-200 foot community garden, located just outside of Longville, was re-established in 2021. The Longville Lions is the garden sponsor and signed the lease with Wabedo Township at no charge.



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