



Above and below, middle school students from Gwinn Area Community Schools began setting raised vegetable garden beds in front

of the school last week. The Forsyth Township Senior Center expects to build a greenhouse later this summer at the center which will grow plant starts for the school vegetable beds and the produce will be used in the school's cafeteria program. (Journal photos by Ryan Jarvi) At right, a meal is enjoyed at the center. Back row from left are Barb Weber, Julie Shaw (former senior center director), Ruth Ann Schatzman, Leah Lusardi; front row from left, Martha Fox, Carol Johnson, Sharon Landry and John Nesberg. (Journal file photo)



## Let's go gardening!

### Gwinn students, Forsyth Township seniors do some planting in support of the senior center

By RYAN JARVI  
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GWINN — The Forsyth Township Senior Center and Gwinn Area Community Schools are partnering up on a plan that will involve some hands-on gardening and some intergenerational activities.

Last week, middle and high school students in Gwinn started work on a few raised vegetable gardens that were set in front of the school, and plans are underway for a greenhouse to be built later this summer behind the senior center.

"Initially, we were going to try to do it together, but the seniors really needed it on their site and we really needed it on our site, so we're starting with garden beds," said Nicole Lackey, a social worker at the school's Guidance Office. "So they're going to grow plant starts for us every season, and then we're hoping to do some intergenerational gardening stuff; classes together so that seniors can get involved with the kids."

Lackey said the school received about a \$2,000 grant from the Upper Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, through the Superior Watershed Partnership, to help with project start-up costs. She also said the vegetables grown will go to the cafeteria to be used in school lunches.

"Actually, the food service director ... has a Farm to School grant, so she can purchase the produce that we grow here and it will go on the salad bar or whatever, which is pretty cool," Lackey said, adding the students expect to grow carrots, lettuce, tomatoes, beets and other vegetables. "All the plants you would expect in a summer garden that can grow in the U.P."

Brian Veale, director at the Forsyth Township Senior Center, said he has plans for a 12-by-16-foot greenhouse that will repurpose lumber from a ramp at the township's clubhouse which is being replaced.



Veale said the center received grants of \$350 from the Marquette County Community Foundation and \$1,000 from the Gwinn Area Community Fund to help with the project's expenses, and the Gwinn Lions Club has tentatively agreed to help with construction.

"So it's starting to fall into place," he said.

Veale hopes the senior center's greenhouse can provide some additional produce that can be used to supplement the Alger-Marquette Community Action Board's Meals on Wheels program, and that the ongoing project will open doors for intergenerational and community interaction.

"I think any time that you have both the youths and older adults talking together, you open up lines of communication for other needs," he said. "Communication is the key to our society, to our communities, and if they can communicate with each other, then they can help each other with each other's needs."

Veale said if seniors can help teach students how to garden, maybe that interaction will grow into other relationships, such as seniors supporting students at athletic events or students mowing a senior's lawn.

"Especially nowadays with the extended family the way it is, we have a lot of seniors, for instance, that have family out in California, Montana, all over the place," he said. "Some of these people are lonely. They don't have the option of going to their grandkids or something like that, so for them just to be able to talk with youths and keep in contact with youths, they're not afraid of them then and the youths aren't afraid of the older ones because it goes in that direction too. There's a lot of youths that are really truly afraid of talking to people."

Lackey said the project will allow students to get some hands-on learning about sustainability, science, food and nutrition, as well as a little bit of history from the seniors.

"The seniors have all this history of gardening and what they've learned from gardening they can really offer the kids, and I think the kids can just offer a relationship and a way to stimulate the seniors," she said. "I think that the relationship between seniors and students, just like grandparents and kids, it tends to be a pretty special relationship, and I think there's some respect there, and so we're hoping that they can learn from each other."

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