

## **Excellence in Teamwork Award Application**

Victory2020 Garden Community Team

### **a) Need for program and teamwork.**

With a pandemic impacting the world, it was important to address the resiliency of our food systems in times of crisis with a cross programmatic effort. The Victory2020 Garden Community was developed as a multi-generational program with the expertise from multiple UF/IFAS Extension counties and program areas to address this need. Based on the concept of the historical victory gardens of the 1930's, this modern version of the victory garden originated in Columbia and Marion counties, and quickly spread to Orange and Sumter counties, as well. Extension agents from all program areas (Horticulture, 4-H, FCS, Livestock, Agriculture, Natural Resources) were called upon to use their specialties in helping to reach participants in all aspects of gardening and pseudo-homesteading. Using Microsoft Teams as a hub, this group of 12 UF faculty and numerous county support staff, were able to organize and share information related to weekly planning meetings, gardening resources, and program evaluations. This teamwork helped faculty members to avoid being overwhelmed with the new protocols and helped to inspire new ideas while learning new technology methods during the difficult time.

### **b) Program goal and objectives, target audience, educational methods**

This team's overall objective was to combine multi-disciplinary program efforts to maximize delivery and impacts through various media formats to reach clientele in their counties (Columbia, Marion, Orange, and Sumter) during the pandemic. The target audience quickly broadened both nationally and internationally. Over the past year, educational methods for this program have reached over 2,300 local, national, and global participants which include the

mailing of seed packets, youth record books, educational posters, social media posts, informative emails to participants, Canvas communication creations, educational videos, and zoom sessions. The combined efforts by this team of faculty accomplished the following: 32 videos totaling 23 hours and 2,000+ views, 8 Canvas modules with 40+ hours of programming for over 1,800 students, 500+ posters and record books mailed, 1,650 seed packets mailed, 22 Zoom classes with over 1,000 live attendees, one Facebook group with over 50,000 reached and 4,000+ engagements monthly, virtual garden tours, and a youth and adult book club. The team received \$7,000 in funding from the community, support from administration, and program funds and is using an IRB approved survey to further evaluate impacts.

**c) Marketing/publicity**

Branding and graphics including the UF/IFAS Extension logo were included in all publications and flyers shared with the public. The UF Diversity and Legal/EEO statement was included on all publications and on social media profiles. Communication was made through all UF/IFAS Extension approved social media accounts.

**d) Involvement and contribution**

Extension agents from all disciplines dedicated a tremendous amount of time and expertise to create presentations and resources using a wide range of social and digital media platforms. Each member of the group participated in a weekly meeting (April-September) and worked in developing success stories, reviewing content, and assisted in developing an evaluation for IRB approval. Discipline and team member names bolded, NEAFCS Members marked with \*:

• **Family and Consumer Science**

**Halie Corbitt\***, **LuAnn Duncan\*** – Involved in developing 3 Canvas Modules, 4 webinars; April to September contributed 25-30% of time.

- **4-H Youth Development**

**Heather Janney\*** - developed 1 Canvas module, developed youth record book; April to September contributed 25-30% of time.

**Chandler Mulvaney, Emma Cannon** - created webinars for youth on victory garden history, planting videos, seed distribution; April to September contributed 30-50% of time.

**Geralyn Sachs** – provided guidance and support to 4-H best management practices in project; April to September contributed 10% of time.

- **Horticulture**

**Erin Harlow, Maxine Hunter, Tiare Silvasy, Amanda Marek** – supported clientele on Facebook, provided weekly webinars, developed Canvas modules, mailed seeds, developed project books for youth, developed videos and reporting forms, led book clubs for youth and adult participants; April to September contributed 45-50% of time.

**Wendy Wilber** - provided guidance and support to horticulture concepts in project; April to September contributed 5% of time.

- **Agriculture**

**Mark Bailey** - mailed seeds, developed Canvas Modules, helped in filming videos; April to September contributed 25-30% of time.

**e) Results and evidence of impact on participants**

- f) The successful cross programmatic efforts from the Victory2020 Garden Community Program has reached gardeners worldwide in five countries, two districts/territories and 40 states. Positive feedback from participants support the effectiveness of the program with creating a sense of community for family and individuals and to provide educational experiences related to gardening, personal well-being, food safety, history, and plant science

related careers. Participants utilized the Victory2020 Garden community to find a sense of belonging during the isolation of the pandemic. Parents and Guardians reported that they and their youth gained the following:

- Increased gardening knowledge – 88% (n = 386/440)
- Improved gardening skills – 81% (n = 356/438)
- Interest in having a garden in the future – 94% (n = 413/438)
- Youth showed new and/or deeper interest in a science related career – 50% (n=147)
- Improved sense of community and family connectedness – 70% (n = 408/583)
- Increased physical activity – 74% (n = 319/433)
- Increased mental health – 72% (n = 315/439)
- Greater consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables – 72% (n = 314/439)

Between 121-719 pounds of corn was harvested by the Victory Gardeners along with 274 - 1,150 pounds of cucumbers, 274 – 1,150 pounds of cowpeas, and 275 – 906 pounds of zucchini and squash. The total vegetable harvest from the Victory Gardeners ranged between 944 to 3,939 pounds.

### **Future implications**

All of the Agents are continuing efforts in 2021, the FCS Agents are expanding their efforts on the Facebook page, inviting others to join, and extending webinar programming to monthly events that focus on in-season fruits or vegetables. This program could be duplicated across the country through local collaborative efforts of State and County Extension Faculty. Presentations have been accepted for the Association of International Agriculture and Extension Education and a journal article will be published by the Journal of International Agriculture and Extension

Education sharing on the power of partnership with the program and replication for others across the nation and internationally.



UF/IFAS Extension  
Michael S. Gutter  
Office of the Dean for Extension

1020 McCarty Hall D  
P.O. Box 110210  
Gainesville, FL 32611-0210  
352-392-1761  
[msgutter@ufl.edu](mailto:msgutter@ufl.edu)

February 15, 2021

Dear NEAFCS awards committee,

As an Associate Dean for Extension and the State Program Leader for 4-H Youth Development, Families and Communities, I would like to convey my support for this multi-program area team and their accomplishments during this past year. The Victory2020 Garden program was sparked by the pandemic and a past response of Extension during a time of need. It brought the idea of the victory gardens of the past into current times by using technology and extension professionals of different program areas together.

The Victory2020 Garden program was built to provide families in a time of uncertainty, with the education and skills needed to produce their own food. The program used an online format and social media to provide these families with the education of basic gardening, food safety, preservation, physical activity in the garden, and the role gardening can play in improving mental health. Agents from the program areas of horticulture, 4-H, agriculture, and family and consumer sciences joined together to provide this amazing program and to support the clients throughout the process reaching 2300 participants and their families, in the state of Florida, nationally and internationally. This program gave these families the needed feeling of food security, positivity, and self-reliance that everyone in 2020 was craving.

The Victory2020 Garden program accomplished so much in 2020 from showing how well different program areas can come together to better serve the community to providing families with education, skills, and resources in a time when the whole world was distant and unpredictable. This team has my full support in their award application of Excellence in Teamwork.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Michael S. Gutter'.

Michael S. Gutter, PhD  
Associate Dean for Extension  
State Program Leader for 4-H Youth Development, Families and Communities  
Florida Cooperative Extension Service

UF/IFAS Extension  
Saqib Mukhtar  
Office of the Dean for Extension

1020 McCarty Hall D  
P.O. Box 110210  
Gainesville, FL 32611-0210  
352-392-1761  
[smukhtar@ufl.edu](mailto:smukhtar@ufl.edu)

February 11, 2021

Dear Awards Committee:

My name is Saqib Mukhtar and I serve as the UF/IFAS Extension Associate Dean and Program Leader for Agriculture and Natural Resources. My Extension colleagues submitting this award application contacted me early on during the spread of COVID-19 and asked for my support to develop the Victory2020 Garden Community educational program. As more adults and children were staying at home due to the pandemic, there was an uptick in people's desire to take up home gardening and to learn to grow some of their own food. I reviewed the agents' Victory2020 educational program plan and immediately offered my support to help fund the development of this creative and innovative team effort.

This diverse team of Extension Agents in Marion and Columbia counties shared with me their vision of the program hosted in an online environment. Over the course of eight weeks, multi-generational participants would be provided with an overview of gardening basics, plant and soil health insights, educational activities to keep audiences engaged, and more. The team shared that they would produce information via videos with an emphasis on hands-on learning from a distance. Additionally, agents involved would lead educational Zoom meetings, provide Facebook live posts, and easy-to-read blogs. They planned to create an online eight-week series to be hosted by Canvas®.

I am truly impressed with the planning, development, delivery, and outcomes and impacts that this team has successfully achieved. They were able to register over 2,300 individuals and the program positively impacted not only adults but youth as well. This team effort has resulted in reaching more than 225,000 individuals in Florida, the USA and internationally.

This multidisciplinary team of agents has truly strived to fulfil the purpose of the "Excellence in Teamwork Award" by demonstrating effective performance and significant results. I strongly recommend the "Victory2020 Garden Community" team for this prestigious Award.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,



Saqib Mukhtar, Ph.D.  
Associate Dean for Extension and Agricultural and Natural Resources Program Leader  
Florida Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences,  
University of Florida

## Supporting documentation – Excellence of Teamwork Application – Victory2020 Gardens Community

- Gardening for a Healthy Body and Mind YouTube Video – created by multiple programmatic area agents

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQj5k9XCwNY&list=PLS2ByMh\\_mmrVIVx2Fp5pUKj5QMVKhY5lj&index=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQj5k9XCwNY&list=PLS2ByMh_mmrVIVx2Fp5pUKj5QMVKhY5lj&index=1)

- Private Facebook Group was very active with posts from all program areas

The screenshot shows the Facebook interface for the 'Victory Gardens' group. On the left is the 'Manage Group' sidebar with options like Home, Admin Tools, Member Requests (14 requests), Automatic Member Approvals, Membership Questions, Pending Posts, Post Topics, Scheduled Posts, Activity Log, Group Rules, Member-Reported Content, and Moderation Alerts. The main content area features a post from 'UF IFAS Extension Columbia County' dated November 18, 2020, with the text: 'Join us this Thursday night or next Monday to learn how to enjoy some fall vegetables!' and two links: <https://tinyurl.com/extsquash> and <https://tinyurl.com/extsweetpotato>. Below the text is a promotional graphic for 'It's Fall' with the text 'JOIN US TO LEARN Recipes and Preservation of Squash and Sweet Potatoes' and the UF IFAS Extension logo. The graphic is split into two sections: 'SQUASH TIME' (Date: November 19th @ 7pm, Online via Zoom, Register Here: <https://tinyurl.com/extsquash>) and 'SWEET POTATO'. On the right side of the page, there are settings for the group: Private (Only members can see who's in the group and what they post), Visible (Anyone can find this group), and General Group. Below these are 'Popular topics in posts' (Online Course (12), Book Club (10), Harvest Logs (2)) and 'Recent media' (a grid of six images showing various garden-related content).

- WCJB News: Read article or watch interview at <https://www.wcjb.com/content/news/Whats-Growing-On-Victory-Gardens-569522071.html>



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## What's Growing On: Victory Gardens



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(WCJB)  
By AJ Willy  
Published: Apr. 9, 2020 at 7:04 PM EDT

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With so many people starting to become concerned about where they are going to get their next meal from, now is the perfect time to start your own in-home victory garden.

Victory gardens are becoming popular in the age of covid-19, but they originated over 75 years ago. During world war two, the government actually asked americans to try and grow food in their backyard to fill in the gaps that there were in the food supply at that time, and they were hugely successful.

If you are stuck at home and want to start your own victory garden, there are actually some classes available across north central florida through different IFAS extension offices.

Wendy Wilbur, the statewide master gardener volunteer program coordinator, says, "in columbia county, Lake City, Marion County in Ocala, and in Orange County they actually have a victory garden program. So far almost 500 people have signed up for this virtual community that's going to teach them about growing their own produce and allow for peer to peer sharing that folks who already have some experience in gardening can share with those who don't have as much experience."

### Most Read

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