

# YWCA IS ON A MISSION

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**ywca**

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**For Immediate Release**

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## YWCA Delaware New Beginnings Garden

*Wilmington, DE:* “Gardening from an emotional perspective? Feeling like I should have paid more attention to them growing up,” laughs “New Beginnings” garden volunteer Vickie Taft Fedele, while pulling weeds and watering. Fedele was referring to her parents Bill and Linda Taft whom she has recruited to work on the garden. “I’ve always appreciated what they’ve grown, I just didn’t pay attention to how they grew it,” she says.

Fedele was recruited by UD Colleague David Taft. Taft in turn was recruited by Lt. Dan Selekman during a Winter delivery of donated diapers, “diaper drop” at Home-Life. He says, Lt Dan told him about previous attempts to grow a garden. “I put it on the list for my leadership class and approached Vickie about her women’s studies class,” he said.

The two professors organized students at the UD Associate in Arts Program to relocate the garden to a better spot on the property located at YWCA’s Home-Life Management Center 709 N. Madison Street, Wilmington, DE 19801 (Wilmington’s Center City Neighborhood). As part of their coursework, the students secured a grant from the Neuberger Berman Group, LLC. Ground breaking for the garden was on Saturday, April 21, 2018. The beds for the vegetables arrived on May 2, 2018 and planting was on May 12, 2018. There was initial concern about the viability of the garden due to the wet Spring and a May frost.

According to YWCA Delaware Chief Housing Officer, Patricia Pettaway Ward, there have been four gardens in the past. “This is the first with consistent skilled volunteers,” she says. She is referring to Teague, Taft Fedele, the Tafts, Mary Szewczyk who was recruited to handle flowers, and a Home-Life client and her young daughter. Pettaway adds, “The garden gives the Home-Life Management Center the ability to plan garden to table meals.” Campers in the Summer Internship Teen Empowerment (SITE) program are being taught to tend the garden and will learn to prepare garden to table meals. The camp runs through July 31, 2018.

The first harvest was July 3, 2018. A basket was presented to YWCA Delaware CEO Stephanie Staats. Produce from the garden has become a regular part of meals at Home-Life. To date more than 60 pounds of produce has been harvested. Tomatoes are being used in salads, fresh zucchini and squash are being served and fresh herbs are being used as seasoning. Patricia Pettaway Ward says parents are reporting that their children are eating vegetables for the first time. She says, “There is an increase in appreciation for fresh fruits and vegetables. It (the garden) is captivating clients and staff.” A preservation plan is being developed so that there is enough produce available for a planned harvest festival.

Plants in the garden include: Tomatoes, pumpkins, zucchini, yellow squash, cucumbers, bush beans, and herbs: oregano, parsley, basil and thyme. A variety of flowers are in pots near a row of benches. Expansion plans are already being discussed. Plans include expanding the vegetable beds and planting flowering shrubs on the mound near the benches.

“If you can grow something you can make it,” says Teague. “There is a therapeutic value in putting seeds in the ground, watering them and watching them grow,” he says. He adds, many of the people in a center like this have faced trauma. “This garden is helpful.”

YWCA Delaware’s Home-Life Management Center provides emergency and transitional housing to homeless families. Almost 30 years ago, YWCA converted a block of abandoned, dilapidated housing in West Center City into safe and stable temporary housing for homeless adults with children. In addition to housing, YWCA provides on-site support services to enable families to learn home economics, develop financial management skills, recover from trauma and improve their employability so they can self-support their family and be successful in independent housing.

The New Beginnings Garden continues YWCA’s long tradition of providing enrichment activities for families that combine the learning and practice of practical life skills with stress reduction and mental health.

YWCA Delaware is on a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, stand up for social justice, help families and strengthen communities. We improve the health & safety, economic mobility, family stability and civic participation of women and their families. Learn more at [www.ywcade.org](http://www.ywcade.org). Facebook @ywcadelaware Twitter @ywcade Instagram @ywcade



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## YWCA Delaware New Beginnings Garden Fact Sheet

### *Wilmington, DE*

- Located in the rear of YWCA Delaware's Home-Life Management Center 709 N. Madison Street, Wilmington, DE 19801 (Wilmington's West Center City Neighborhood)
- Last winter while dropping off donated diapers, Lt. Daniel Selekman learned about Home-Life's plans to plant a garden. He spoke with UD Community Engagement Professor David Teague.
- Teague took the project to his leadership class and also enlisted the help of Vickie Fedele who involved her Women's Studies students and her parents, who are gardeners.
- The garden was initiated by students at the UD Associate in Arts Program and made possible by the generous support of Neuberger Berman Group, LLC.
- Ground breaking was on Saturday, April 21, 2018. The boxes were installed on May 2, 2018. Planting was on May 12, 2018.
- The rainy Spring and May frost had the volunteers concerned about the garden.
- There have been four gardens in the past. This is the first with consistent skilled volunteers.
  - Vickie Taft Fedele, David Teague, Bill and Linda Taft, Mary Szewczyk, a Home-Life client and her young daughter.
- First harvest was July 3, 2018. A basket was presented to YWCA Delaware CEO, Stephanie Staats.
- To date more that 60 pounds of produce has been harvested.
- This is the largest harvest we have ever had.
- The garden gives the Home-Life Management Center the ability to plan garden to table meals.
- Tomatoes are being used in salads, fresh zucchini and squash are being served and fresh herbs are being used as seasoning.
- Residents are taking part in the care and maintenance of the garden as well. Parents are reporting that their children are eating vegetables.
- Home-Life offers the Summer Internship Teen Empowerment (SITE) Program through July 31. Campers are being taught to tend the garden and how to prepare garden to table meals.
- A Fall harvest festival is being planned. A preservation plan is being developed so that there is enough produce available.
- Plants in the garden:
  - Tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, pumpkins, zucchini, yellow squash, bell peppers, cucumbers, bush beans, and herbs: oregano, parsley, basil and thyme.
- Estimated yield: Bushel of tomatoes, ten pounds beans, 30-50 squash, 20 cucumbers, 20 peppers.

- Varieties of tomatoes: Beefsteak, best boy, Rutgers, Brandywine.
  
- Flowers in the garden: canna, calocasia, zinnia, alyssum, vinca and marigolds.
- Proposed expansion: Flowers on the mound, perhaps additional vegetable beds.

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