

“Hope Grows” at the Carter Center

August 8, 2014

From Colorado, to Northern Virginia, to Maryland, wherever Carter Center Guidance Counselor Sonja Poole has lived, she has grown some kind of garden.

“I was raised on a farm in North Carolina and gardening comes second-nature to me,” said Ms. Poole.

Ms. Poole used her gardening passion and skills to develop a Service Learning project for Carter students that would “foster a sense of community, self-esteem, team work, and establish an appreciation for the environment by producing life-sustaining nutrients.”



“This flower and vegetable gardening project brings science to life,” said Peggy Stanford, Carter Center School Principal.

Gardening for me is peaceful, thought provoking, and gives a sense of accomplishment,” said Ms. Poole.

The sense of accomplishment, according to Ms. Poole, “improves self-esteem.”



The first project planting was implemented in March, followed by a second planting the week of Earth Day celebrations in April.

The gardeners selected plants based on what would grow best in Maryland, “as well as plants that would not exceed our garden space,” according to Ms. Poole.

Guidance Counselor Sonja Poole and students growing “hope” at the Carter Center.

Many Carter students are from an urban environment. “They may have little or no knowledge about plant life outside of a book and little or no contact with growing plants,” said Ms. Poole. “I felt the need to introduce and to expose our students to a project they were unfamiliar with but also one that would teach and require them to provide hands-on constant monitoring and care.”



“I plan to plant a garden with my grandmother when I leave Carter Education,” said one student.

The project identified five recipients outside of the school setting to receive ongoing donations from each harvest. “Students decided that recipients should either be single parents or elderly people in need of assistance,” said Ms. Poole.

“Although students are not providing direct service to their home communities through the garden project,” said Peggy Stanford, Carter School Principal, “they are growing fruits and vegetables to share with local residents and the Carter facility.”



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“Gardening is more fun than I thought,” one student commented, “except for the bugs!”



“Hope” in full bloom at the Carter Center.