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The Durham News

Partnerships grow at Durham Central Park

Courtesy of Ann Alexander



SEEDS holds its fifth annual Pie Social from 1 to 5 pm today (May 19) at the Pavilion at Durham Central Park.

This event helps raise money for the Durham Inner-city Gardener Program that empowers high school youth to develop social entrepreneurial and leadership skills through growing food.

The Pie Social is a fancy feast of local sweet and savory pies that are meat-filled, vegetarian and gluten-free. All of the pies are donated by local restaurants and home bakers

The gardens at Durham Central Park are beginning to burst with color, texture, smells and also some yummy items!

At the southwest side of the park on Hunt Street is the Garden of Eatin', an edible garden managed and maintained by SEEDS (South Eastern Efforts Developing Sustainable Spaces, Inc). This is another creative relationship that DCP has with a community partner to sustain the park and develop interesting gardens throughout.

The way that SEEDS got involved with DCP is a typical story of how things happen at the park. Someone comes up with the germ of an idea; folks take it and mold it into something exciting; and then Durham Central Park just gets better and better!

It all began with the creation of the Durham Farmer's Market in the early 2000s. Brenda Brodie, one of the original founders of SEEDS had the idea for a farmer's market. They started small on Orange Street in downtown Durham and eventually the Durham Farmer's Market became its own entity.

The market moved around to various locations early on but really needed a permanent home. That's when Durham Central Park got involved as a possible permanent location for the farmers to sell their goods.

At that point, SEEDS, the market and DCP, with the help of Malcolm White from Self-Help Credit Union, all combined forces with the City of Durham to raise money to build the Pavilion at Durham Central Park. The Pavilion is now rented to the Durham Farmer's Market as their permanent home every Saturday during the year and Wednesdays during the warm months. DCP also rents the Pavilion to organizations and individuals for many other events throughout the year (check out DurhamCentralPark.org for upcoming events!).

After the Pavilion was built in 2006 and the Durham Farmer's Market had a new home, SEEDS decided they wanted to continue to be part of DCP by offering a community garden at the park. One of their Americorps volunteers got a grant to establish the Garden of Eatin' and it is still in existence today.

The Garden of Eatin' is a free-pick, public edible garden by SEEDS and its collaborators. The focus is on organic edibles- fruit trees and shrubs, herbs, medicinals and veggies. On any given day during the warmer months, you can harvest some rosemary, basil or thyme. One of my favorites in the summer is when the fig tree is in season – mmmm good – and the peach tree offers some mighty tasty bites as well!

Hilary Nichols, the garden manager for SEEDS, is very busy this spring organizing the Garden of Eatin' and the gardeners that have offered to volunteer to maintain a certain part of the garden. The Garden Volunteers are:

- Bountiful Backyards
bountifulbackyards@gmail.com
- Cottage Garden Landscaping – Frank Hyman
frankhyman@liberatedgardener.net
- DeRose Garden and Landscape – Michele DeRose
michele@derosegardens.com

- Interfaith Food Shuttle – Lindsay Perry
perry.lindsay@gmail.com
- Svava Restoration Carpentry – Kevin Svava
svavarestoration@gmail.com
- Tributary Land Design and Build – Katherine Gill
katherinegill@earthlink.net

These volunteer organizations design and plant each section of the garden, and Hilary says there are a few more spots available for new groups to adopt. Contact Hilary at SEEDS if you are involved in an organization/business that would like to adopt a section of the Garden of Eatin'.

Hilary also welcomes volunteer drop-ins! "If you'd just like to help out every once in a while, please drop by the Garden of Eatin' to weed, prune, and mulch the garden on Wednesday evenings during Durham Farmers Market hours, or whenever you have a moment. Visit on Wednesday evenings between 3:30 and 6:30 p.m. year-round to volunteer, hang out, taste, share ideas about gardening, and garden the free-pick Garden of Eatin' together. This garden is for all to enjoy!"

"The Garden of Eatin' was created as a partnership to cultivate a truly public garden, one that would nourish both mind and body and help to educate and cultivate community, " says Emily Egge, executive director of SEEDS. "This is a rare interactive public space – so many 'public' spaces have limited hours, or 'don't pick/don't walk here' signs. At the Garden of Eatin' we welcome folks to help themselves and enjoy!"

So come by Durham Central Park soon and check out the beautiful bounty at the Garden of Eatin'! And if you'd like to learn more about SEEDS check out their website at seedsnc.org. Also plan on coming to DCP from 1 to 5 p.m. today (May 19) for the fifth annual SEEDS Pie Social to taste offerings from local bakers at a fundraiser for SEEDS!

See you at DCP!

Ann Alexander is the executive director of Durham Central Park Inc., a nonprofit organization that manages and maintains the five acre green space in Durham at 501 Foster St. For rental or event information, visit www.DurhamCentralPark.org