

Greensgrow awards grants for local gardening projects

By Paulina Malek
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Mary's Community Fund, an endowment fund set up in honor of Mary Seton Corboy, founder of Greensgrow who passed away on Aug. 7, awarded several organizations and community gardens with



grants to support their greening projects. The University City Review previously reported that the winners were announced March 26 during the 20th anniversary celebration at its Kensington location, and its fourth year in West Philadelphia.

The People's Emergency Center, a West Philadelphia organization that provides a wide range of services like housing and job training, was awarded \$500 to help rebuild planters at 40th Street and Lancaster Avenue after a drunk driver crashed into them. Martin Luther King Jr. gave a historic speech at this location in 1965, attracting a crowd of about 10,000 to the corner, and spoke about the need for "freedom now" in the City. The second award went to Kol Tzedek Synagogue, a Jewish faith organization and tenant of the Calvary Center for Culture and Community.

Aimee Ando, who is leading Kol Tzedek's garden project, said her family has been a longtime supporter of Greensgrow in Kensington and initially wanted to propose the project as a response to window vandalism at the Calvary Center in January.

"With the current assault on our environment and anti-Semitic threats, the call seemed even greater to act locally whenever possible to create beauty, healing, and, in the least, even begin to literally sow the seeds of forgiveness and transformation," Ando said in an email.

The project, called "Gan Shalom: Garden of Wholeness," is being constructed by Ando's friends in landscape architecture, Amy Linsenmayer and Jamee Kominsky, who are doing the work pro bono. They hope to have the

garden completed by mid-summer with the help of community members. (There will be a formal blessing ceremony in late summer or early fall.)

According to Ando, the building of a community garden aligns with ancient Jewish texts and practices, but will also serve as a sanctuary for community members.

"Beyond this idea and in the everyday, we want to create a healing garden space for pastoral visits, congregants, meditation and all passersby to enjoy..." Ando said.

Though St. Bernard Community Garden did not receive a grant from Greensgrow, the organization offered to donate plants for a pollinator garden, which will be completed in the fall. In recent years, the garden was under the threat of sale twice. In 2012, 1010 S. St. Bernard St. went up for sheriff's sale, but was returned due thanks to "quick mobilization of the garden's advocates and a last-minute bid by Councilwoman Blackwell," according to the garden's website. Neighborhood Gardens Trust, an organization that obtains and preserves community gardens in Philadelphia, now owns the parcel. In 2016, the property at 1008 S. St. Bernard St. was put up for sale without notice by a private tax collection agency. According to records by the Neighborhood Gardens Trust, Gwendolyn C. Anderson now owns this parcel.

The stability of a community garden influences Greensgrow's decision whether or not to award grants, according to Ryan Kuck, executive director at the organization. The question of whether there are resources and volunteers to maintain the garden are all aspects to consider when making the decision.

Pollinator gardens can be a positive thing in an urban community, according to Kuck. Flowers provide the community with a host of benefits, but bees can also be more resistant to Colony Collapse Disorder in an urban landscape.

Colony Collapse Disorder has been in the public sphere for the last decade. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, during the winter of 2007-2007, beekeepers began to report that a large number of their hives were dying, about 30-90 percent. About 50 percent of all affect colonies "demonstrated symptoms that were inconsistent with any known causes of honey bee death," according to the EPA. Though colony loss from the disorder has slowed down, according to data from beekeepers for 2014-2015, colony loss is still a concern.

Greensgrow will also be celebrating its 20th anniversary with a "A Taste of Kensington," a benefit at the Philadelphia Brewing Company for a "special night of tastings and entertainment celebrating the unique and diverse food scene in Kensington."