

Urban Outreach at Phipps

The Phipps Summer High School Internship Program: Learning for a Green Future

For six weeks each summer, eight high school students take part in a unique and unforgettable learning experience at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens. Through a combination of hands-on work with the Phipps horticulture staff, classes, documentary films, readings and field trips, our summer internship program exposes teenagers to environmental issues, plant science, healthy living and a range of “green” careers.



Gordon, planting two kinds of basil

In the summer of 2011, the concept of healthy eating became reality for the interns as they designed, planted and maintained their own organic raised beds and regularly took home freshly-picked produce. Working in Mellon Park’s herb garden, touring Braddock Farms and cooking with food writer, Nancy Hanst, reinforced what these teenagers gleaned from reading Michael Pollan’s Food Rules: healthy choices are accessible and delicious.



Aneesa, Jamesha and La'Derionte interspersed their vegetable bed with marigolds

The internship is specifically aimed at underserved students in the City of Pittsburgh and beyond, who otherwise would not have such an opportunity. Acceptance into the program is based in part on financial need; students must qualify for free or reduced-cost lunch in order to apply for the position. This program is made possible by the generous support of the Grable Foundation and the Pennsylvania Education Improvement Tax Credit Program.



Interns cook only the freshest ingredients, with Nancy Hanst

Phipps Summer Camp



Students chop fresh vegetables to cook

Another way that Phipps reaches out to the under-served communities in Pittsburgh is by hosting a summer camp for youth enrolled East End Cooperative Ministries (EECM) services. Phipps creates programming that caters to the children from the EECM, revolving around the concepts of plant science and healthy foods and living, while also incorporating activities pertaining to the arts the environment.

In the summer of 2011, the EECM sent campers to Phipps for a 3-week-long camp. The primary focus of the camp was to have the children understand where food comes from, how they can grow it in an urban setting, and why it’s important for one know what he or she is eating. In order to do this, campers were educated about soil science, the parts of a plant, and how to grow and take care of a garden. They participated in activities including designing their own garden, growing vegetables, and harvesting plants daily in order to cook and prepare healthy homemade snacks for themselves and each other.



Kenya, in the garden, with a head of cabbage



Campers prepare their homemade healthy snacks