

# Crown Point flourishes, adapting events to the pandemic challenge

by Laura Straub

The COVID-19 pandemic hasn't slowed the growth of Crown Point Ecology Center in Bath.

From installing new raised beds and nursing seedlings to taking Crown Point's annual plant sale and fundraiser online, interim executive officer Carolyn Kean has overseen a busy spring.

The center learned May 3 that it was the recipient of grant funds intended to support those impacted by COVID-19.

Crown Point typically donates 20 percent of its certified organic harvest, but using grant funds, staff are building additional raised beds to increase food donations to the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank and local pantries. Construction on the beds began in early June.

"The new donation garden will consist of eight 16-by-4-foot raised beds," said Kean. "Each bed will be filled with topsoil and compost and then planted with various vegetable plants, including tomatoes, peppers, squash and eggplant. All were started by seed here in the farm greenhouse.

"When selecting wood and soil, we are very careful to meet the requirements to maintain the certified organic status of the farm. Treated wood cannot be used, so we are using cedar. Crown Point has not had chemicals added to the land for nearly 40 years."

In addition to using the funding to create beds that meet Crown Point's high standards, funds will also go toward trellising materials and signage for the newly developed garden.

Once the gardens are up and growing, Kean said the center will be looking for individuals or groups to adopt a bed, taking on weeding, watering and harvesting.

"This new venture is perfect for those loving gardening but don't have the space, or for those who love being outside," she said.

In addition to taking on new projects in the wake of the pandemic, Crown Point has had to adjust some existing initiatives, too.

Soon after the center selected a new venue and started advertising for the its annual plant sale, the state government imposed stay-at-home orders.

"We reviewed our options and quickly

switched to an online sale," said Kean.

In its new format, the sale had two phases. Phase one included mainly herbs and perennials and began in late April, a full month ahead of its usual start date. Phase two began two weeks later, when the center listed its organic vegetable plants.

With the help of more than 30 volunteers, Kean and her team fulfilled over 650 orders directly to customers' cars with minimal contact.

"A few of the plant sale pick-up days, it actually snowed," said Kean.

Weather aside, the sale was a success.

"I think most of our customers were happy to get some great-looking plants, even though they were not able to stroll around the farm and pick them out personally," she said.

COVID-19 also caused cancellation of the center's annual summer camps.

Fortunately, the farm staff were considered essential workers during the government shutdown. They were able to continue seeding and transplanting for the plant sale and the Community Supported Agriculture program.

In the CSA program, individuals or families purchase a share of the harvest and receive between five and nine vegetables over the course of 20 weeks.

"Our CSA shares sold out this year, and we had a waiting list," Kean said. "We have heard many CSAs have sold out this year. It feels like there is a revival of knowing where your food is grown and who grows it."

She added that Crown Point's farmer and assistant farmer are both Revere High School grads who attended local universities, Kent State and the University of Akron.

"There is something to be said about knowing where your food comes from," she said.

Crown Point's signature fundraiser, The Taste of the Earth, will be a virtual program this year, with dinner delivered to



*New garden bed construction is underway at Crown Point.*  
Photos courtesy Crown Point Ecology Center



*A volunteer loads a car with plants during Crown Point's annual sale.*

people's doors. The center will provide a short, virtual program on Saturday, Aug. 22, including a video highlighting the center's property, programs and mission, along with a four-course meal prepared by chef John Bahas, complete with a cocktail and wine. The event will also include an online silent and oral auction.

For more information about The Taste of the Earth, adopting a bed or any of the programs at Crown Point Ecology, contact Carolyn Kean at [carolyn@crownpointecology.org](mailto:carolyn@crownpointecology.org). ∞

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