



THINK GLOBALLY, GROW LOCALLY

By KIRBY NEUMANN-REA
News editor

Digging in the dirt is the same no matter which continent you're on.

That was evident last week when a group of international medical professionals put on gardening gloves and got on their knees to plant cucumbers at the Hood River FISH food bank community garden.

Garden volunteer coordinator Susan Randolph told the visitors she was concerned about their clothes.

"Don't worry about getting our clothes dirty! We are ready," Dr. Abdinoor Mohamed of Kenya told her.

The seven visitors were in Hood River May 27 to learn about technology to help reach rural and underserved citizens, through the International Visitor Leadership Program officered by the U.S. State Department's Office of International Visitors/Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

"It's a great program," said China's Dr. Bihu Gao of the Leadership visit, who came to get ideas about how to improve treatment analyses for elderly patients in rural areas. The group also visited One

Medical visitors from developing countries learn, and plant, in Hood River visit



Photos by Kirby Neumann-Rea

PLANTING AT Hood River FISH are Reham Abdelmohsen, left, a community health workers supervisor with Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) in Egypt, and Dr. Raed Sabbah, head of the board of Union of Health Care Committees, from Palestine, right, and Dr. Bihu Gao, director of Medical Affairs, Zhongshan Hospital, Dalian University in China, standing. Also participating were Dr. Farhana Sultana, Medical officer with Swapara Union Sub-Center in Bangladesh; Dr. Abdinoor Mohamed, chief officer, public and sanitation, Wajir County government, Kenya; Eman Alsourani, external relations manager, Union of Health Care Committees, Gaza, Palestine; and Dr. Maher Aljohani, medical resident, King Khalid University Hospital, Saudi Arabia.

Community Health (formerly La Clinica) in Hood River, Oregon Health Sciences University and the Oregon Rural Based Practice Network in Portland, Virginia Garcia Memorial Hospital in Cedar Hills, and Warm Springs Health Center in Warm Springs, before flying out to Louisville, Ky., to round out their two-week stay.

They are seeking responses to a variety of health challenges to rural residents in their homelands.

Eman Alsourani, of Gaza, Palestine, said she came to learn ways to improve primary care in the densely-populated Gaza Strip, which has experienced wars with Israel in 2008 and 2014, but receives most of its food imports from Israel. She said Gaza residents try to grow their own food, but the gardens have often been destroyed in shelling. She added that the world-class strawberries grown commercially there are sold to Israel rather than for local consumption.

"Many forms of aid coming in, but I need to educate people about these food aid boxes, to reconsider what you have at home. You can use it badly and it affects their health," she said. A particular problem is lack of protein, and she said aid groups can do more to improve labeling as well as assessing individual family needs and packaging food-stuffs accordingly.

Gao said that in China, "Young people go to the cities, and only the elderly people stay. The problem is that they have no medical (services) there, so I came to the United States to learn how is the system organized. I'm very impressed."

On Wednesday, Dr. Gao was first to select cucumber starts from a flat held by Randolph.

"My generation in China, we experienced (farm work)," he said. "As students, until middle school we study in the morning and in the afternoon we go to farm. This is something very familiar."

Helping at FISH garden seemed to reconnect these doctors and professionals with their upbringing.

"When I was a child I did this with my family," said Reham Abdelaleem Hussain

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"We are really excited that this facility is about to get up and running. It will go a long way."

— TODD DIERKER

FISH Garden grows with seeds, water, and volunteers



Photo by Kirby Neumann-Rea

GARDEN volunteer manager Susan Randolph shows visitors around the garden. In the background at left is the new FISH facility; at right is Our Redeemer/Asbury Church. The food bank building and the garden are both on land donated by the church.

How do the clients qualify?

Do you use pesticides?

How do you grow your volunteers?

These were just a few questions the foreign visitors asked local folks involved in nutrition education and food provision.

FISH volunteer Debby Chenoweth said clients need to show proof of residence in Hood River County or Mosier, giving them a punch card to receive food once a month. Other than that, no demonstration of need is required; food is given in good faith, she explained.

Garden volunteer coordinator Susan Randolph showed the visitors how to plant cucumbers and gave them a tour of the large community garden, which depends on volunteers from throughout the community. She stressed that all vegeta-

bles are grown organically, with the use of sustainable soil amendments including compost, and no pesticides.

"This is not a new project as there has been a garden at this location for a number of years, in past maintained by members of the Our Redeemer community," Randolph explained. "This year, with this new (FISH) facility and all this new capacity, we are ramping up our efforts to build not just a singular shared community garden but make it into a region-wide volunteer garden, with all food donated to FISH."

"It initially it started in the faith community, interdenominational, with a good group of people from a number of

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GORGE



FRESH AT FARMERS MARKETS:

Carrots, grown by Ben Saur of Saur Farms, as well as strawber-

WHAT'S UP AT



ries and green onions from other local growers, are just a few samples of what's available at Gorge Grown markets this time of year. Farmers Market at Hood River

GROWN



Middle School is 5-8 p.m. Thursdays. In a new location this year is Hood River Saturday Market, at Oak Street Pub parking lot, Fourth and Oak streets, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mercado del Valle returns on June 20 to Mid Valley Elementary.

Photo by Kirby Neumann-Rea