

LIFESTYLES

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SUNDAY

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COMMUNITY GARDENS

Food sustainability



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KENT KRIEGSHAUSER/The Register-Mail

Peter Schwartzman picks cucumbers from the Mound Farm community garden on West Tompkins Street in Galesburg.

Community gardening slowly gaining interest locally

AT HOME

Time alone with Dad and the fish

The fishing experiences I've had consisted of enjoyment touched by moments of incredulity and panic.

The first time I went fishing was on a lake in Wisconsin, accompanied by my father, who hated fishing but was a good dad who wanted to provide his children with myriad experiences in life. So we sat, the two of

us in the middle of a lake that we had reached by luck rather



than skill. **SANDRA DEPALMA-ODELL**

If we had been rowers on Viking longships, we undoubtedly would have been thrown overboard from rowing in circles for hours.

We realized that neither of us was capable of touching the bait, let alone actually putting it on the hook. The only person capable of doing that, my mother, was reading on shore, serene in the knowledge that her husband was busy bringing home the bacon, as it were, for our family of six. Dad looked hopefully at me; I shook my head. Casting around, he found a rusty can on the floor which my mother had thoughtfully filled with dew worms. Emptying them on the boat's bottom, we used a wooden match to separate one from its writhing companions (only the damp boat bottom kept us from setting fire to the entire boat). Dad eased the end of the hook into the worm and, in unison, we turned our heads away when the inside of the worm appeared on the outside. Finally the evil deed was done and Dad dropped the hook over the side.

We bobbed and chatted and spent

As sustainability in products and personal practices becomes more and more popular across the country, sustainability itself has become its own buzzword. Many people in Galesburg have taken it upon themselves to start living more sustainably as well through purchasing food through the Local Growers' Network, attending the weekly farmers' market or through learning how to garden.

And while backyard gardening is somewhat common, participating in a community gardening has gained some interest in Galesburg during the last year.

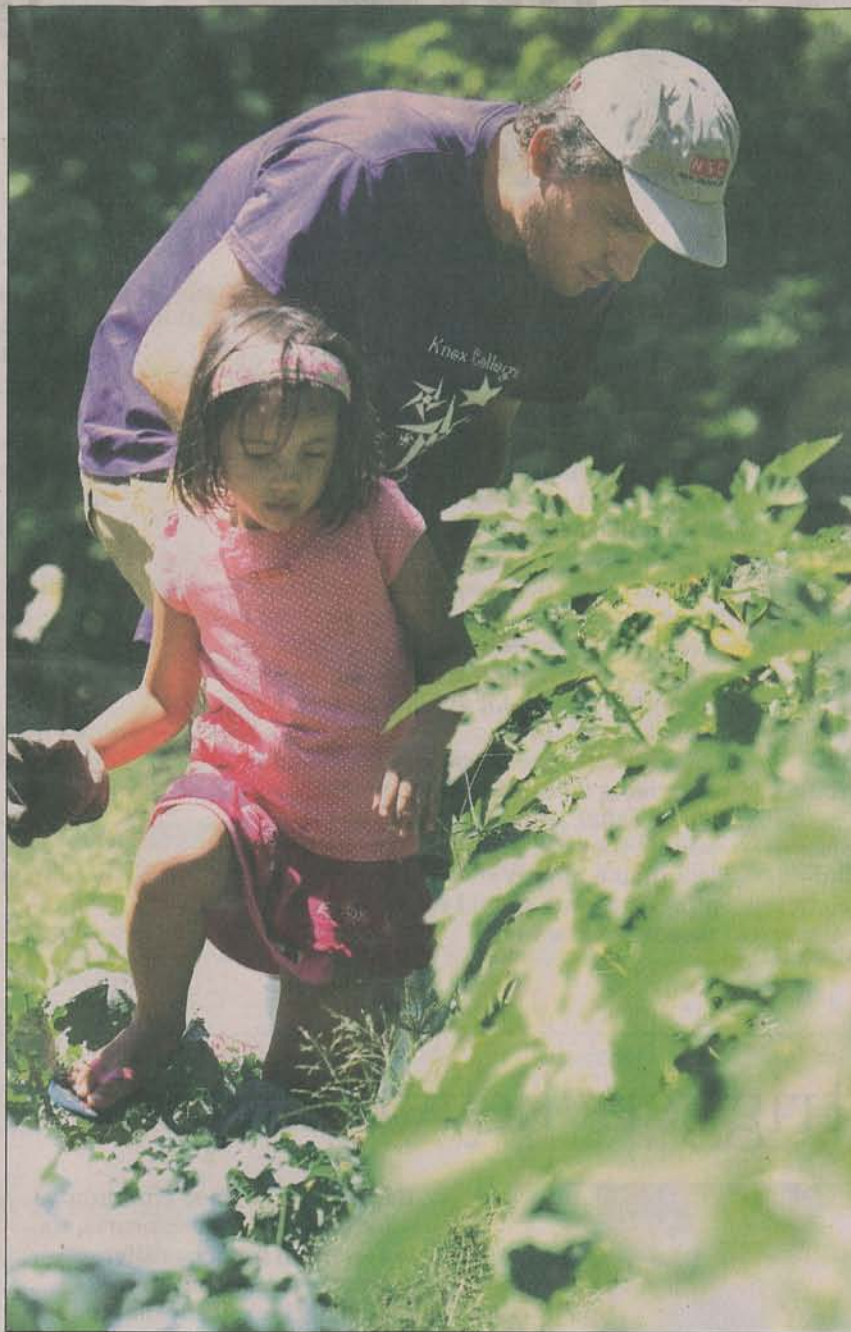
"I think it cycles," said master gardener Rhonda Brady, executive director of Knox County Area Project, on whether or not community gardening in Galesburg is a trend. "People get interested in their food source. That's one reason people garden. Another reason is because they have the space.

"There may be people who do it because it's trendy, but that's not the whole reason," Brady said.

Last year, a group formed at the Center at 123 Cherry St. in Galesburg. Going by the name of Galesburg Neighborhood Gardens, the group sought to create community garden spaces throughout Galesburg where people could have their own plots and share the food that was grown there.

When the Neighborhood Garden group started, there were six main plots for the gardens. John Derge, who started the Galesburg Neighborhood Gardens group, would have meetings every week at the Center, and nearer to the time of planting season, the group planted seeds in the Center so that they could begin to grow indoors.

Most of the meetings earlier on had substantial attendance, usually with 10 community members from town and five Knox students attending. As the first gardening season ended, however, fewer and fewer people



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KENT KRIEGSHAUSER/The Register-Mail

Peter Schwartzman picks okra at Mound Farm, a community garden on West Tompkins Street, as his daughter Juniper, 5, helps.

showed up.

Derge thinks that overall, the country is seeing a growing number of community gardens. "You see them advertised a lot more now and I think there are more of them," Derge said. "In Galesburg, there was some interest in (the community gardens)

but not as much as we'd hoped for."

This summer, the gardens are still going strong, though it seems to be like there is a smaller number of people working on them.

Professor of Environmental Studies at Knox College, Peter



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A sunflower patch greets visitors to the Mound Farm community garden on West Tompkins Street in Galesburg.

Schwartzman bought a third of an acre of land for \$600 last year in order to create a new garden space. Located on the 400 block of West Tompkins Street, he hoped that the garden would be a place where anyone from the community could come work and reap the harvest of the garden.

"I've put in about 110 hours of labor, and the community has put in about 50," Schwartzman said. He is hoping to hold an open barbecue soon to help to bring more of the community into his garden plot, which he calls Mound Farm.

"Students are more acutely aware of the environmental trends that are affecting everyone," Schwartzman said about community gardening becoming a trend. But trend or not, he said it's good that people are becoming aware, since less than 10 percent of the food consumed in Illinois is actually from Illinois.

"It's almost like an obligation to take advantage of the incredibly rich soil we have," Schwartzman said.

"It's almost like an obligation to take advantage of the incredibly rich soil we have."

— Peter Schwartzman, Knox College professor of environmental studies