

The Silver Cross Healthy Community Commission (SCHCC)—a non-profit organization affiliated with Silver Cross Hospital—partnered with the Warren-Sharpe Community Center so children from low-income, high-risk families in Joliet can create a community garden and urban farm.

The Warren-Sharpe Community Center is located in a “food desert,” an urban neighborhood without ready access to fresh, healthy and affordable food, which prompted SCHCC leaders to launch the project. The lack of access to such food contributes to a poor diet and can lead to higher levels of obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

Since 2014, SCHCC has donated over \$90,000 for the project, which:

- Produces fresh vegetables and herbs annually for hundreds of families;
- Provides workshops on healthy cooking;
- Brings together multigenerational neighbors;
- Trains young parents about the connections between healthy food choices, cognitive development and long-term health issues;
- Develops support systems for parents and educators to teach kids about plant life, science concepts and environmental stewardship;
- Reconnects “plugged-in” youth to nature;
- Beautifies the neighborhood; and
- Facilitates youth entrepreneurship by marketing surplus production.

With so many positives to the project, the Warren-Sharpe Community Center acquired land for additional crop development and published a cookbook, *Veggie Casserole: Kids Cook the Darndest Things!*

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