

Greeley community garden tour shows off fresh veggies



Sunday's pelting sun didn't keep some Greeley residents from sipping on agua frescas and munching on mushroom fritters to help local gardens. Greeley's third annual community garden tour was Sunday afternoon. Organizers hope to raise awareness about — and a little bit of money for — the gardens.

Of the city's 12 community gardens, six took part in the event. Not only did they have guides to show newbies around, they each hosted a local chef who doled out healthy, veggie-laden

dishes.

Weld County's community health campaign, Make TODAY Count!, hosted the event, and proceeds go back to the gardens. "It's the one day a year that they get to show off their work," said the campaign's coordinator, Carlee Rosen.

"It's really important for this generation of kids. We've gotten really out of touch with where our food comes from. — Carlee Rosen, Make TODAY Count! Campaign coordinator

That they did. Dozens of residents turn out for the events. Last year, about 60 bought tickets, said Deborah DeBoutez, a neighborhood program specialist for the city and organizer at the Clay Center Community Garden, 1024 6th Ave. Last year's event raised \$600.

"Hopefully, we'll break that record," she said.

Gardeners pay a small fee when they rent a plot, which is usually between \$20 and \$40. But this doesn't cover all of the expenses, DeBoutez said. Although many of the gardens get financial help from grants and other means, keeping up with maintenance and water costs is difficult. The tour does more than raise money.

Paul Conklin serves as the director at the city's oldest community garden, Houston Gardens, 515 23rd Ave. He said children especially benefit from the event. "There's a lot of families with young kids who have never seen a garden," he said.

Sunday, toddlers ran around Houston picking at their kale and berry salads. The gardens appeal to children year-round. Most of them have student volunteers.

The Children's Garden, 919 A St., is a neighbor of the Rodarte Center. About 70 kids come from there to work in the garden at some point during the year, said director Kim Trevino.

Anyone who works in the garden is allowed to take food home, she said. Workers aren't the only ones reaping the benefits. If someone is hungry and needs food, they can come get it, Trevino said.

They try to plant foods that break from the norm.

"I'm trying to expose the kids to more foods," she said. Not only are Greeley kids getting fresh foods for free from these gardens, they're taking part in the growing process.

"It's really important for this generation of kids," Rosen said. "We've gotten really out of touch with where our food comes from."