COMMUNITY GARDEN FOR THE 38126 FOOD DESERT AREA
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ABSTRACT
Poor diet and exercise can cause overweight and obesity and can also cause more serious illnesses and chronic diseases such as diabetes, coronary heart disease, hypertension, stroke, etc. Although a lot of people are aware of this, they may be lacking the resources and money to improve their diet. This project will teach community members ways to economically obtain nutritious foods in a food desert.

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND
The purpose of this project was and is to provide a source of nutritious food for the community members in the 38126 area. This will help to improve their diets, while reducing family food budgets and conserving resources.

According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) food deserts are areas that lack access to affordable fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat milk and other food that make up the full range of a healthy diet. The Food Desert Oasis Act, A U.S. House of Representatives bill in legislative limbo, has designated parts of Memphis, Nashville, and 18 other cities in Tennessee as food desert zones.

The neighborhood in which the campus of LeMoyne-Owen College sits has only convenience stores that do not provide fresh produce. A garden will be beneficial to the community because it will produce fresh fruits and vegetables, and improve the quality of life of local residents and students. Additionally, it will create opportunities for recreation, therapy, exercise and education.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES
This project aims to teach the community members how to reuse common materials, such as thrown away tires or wood, to build simple yet efficient gardens while spending very little money.

An empty and abandoned lot in the neighborhood was cleaned, and students built raised beds out of planks of wood that were thrown away. Students also collected tires to plant decorative flowers. Plants that began to grow in a green house were transferred to some of the beds, and other plants were planted directly into the ground. An old gate was torn down and was used as a bin to hold compost together. Students took turn to water the plants, pull weeds, and clean the perimeters of the garden.

In the upcoming semesters, the garden will be moved to a bigger and more opened lot, in order to hold more beds. Part of the lot will be used as a resting area for visitors to relax. There will be a better variety of vegetables, spices, and fruit trees for the warm and cold weather.

Residents were surveyed about their access to fruits and vegetables and their thoughts about a community garden.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
LeMoyne – Owen College
Meharry Medical College
Grow Memphis

DISCUSSION
✓ Community members expressed concern over lack of fresh produce in community
✓ Community members said they ate more fast food and prepackaged food than fresh food or home prepared foods
✓ Community members became interested in the foods that were grown in the garden, and they gave suggestions.
✓ Students and teachers volunteered to help plant the vegetables, and they provided the garden with a scarecrow.
✓ Students saved their food remains to add to the compost bin.
✓ Some community members picked vegetables from the garden and consumed them

REFERENCES

FURTHER INFORMATION
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