



THE GREENING OF GILBERT PARK

Without you, there would be no way.



“

It is humbling to see the work that is going on and being able to interact and connect even a little with the families in the area

SCOTT MCKAY
NORTH WEST COMPANY

One of Winnipeg’s largest public housing complexes, Gilbert Park is home to over 250 families and 600 children. Today, it’s also home to a blossoming community garden, thanks to almost 200 volunteers who joined forces through United Way’s Day of Caring program.

In this case, a Day of Caring became a Week of Caring when employees from the North West Company dug in over five days in June 2010 to help area residents and volunteers from Boys and Girls Clubs of Winnipeg (BGCW) create a sustainable source of fresh fruit, vegetables, pride and beauty for the inner-city neighbourhood.

The garden will also teach local children about urban agriculture, waste minimization (recycling and composting) and conservation, says Gerald Villegas, manager of environmental services at Boys and Girls Clubs, a United Way agency partner. Just two short months after it was planted, a portion of the harvest was already for sale at a local community garden market – supplied by Gilbert Park youth learning to wholesale and retail produce.

“We all have a choice to make: to make a difference or not...And I’m so proud of my fellow employees and the decision they’ve made,” says North West Company representative Scott McKay. McKay says their involvement in the project also gave North West employees a chance to see firsthand the impact of their donations to United Way (over \$200,000 in 2010).

A single mother of five and one of the residents who is reaping the garden’s benefits, Cassandra “Kat” Golondrina expressed her gratitude with a poem – “a thank you from all of us to keep in your hearts, just like we have our garden to keep and feed ours.”

“It’s groups like you who step forward that really make a difference for the children and youth we serve,” Heather Black, director of volunteers and events for Boys and Girls Clubs, told volunteers.

So thrilled with the experience, the groups are already planning to collaborate on another Day of Caring in 2011, Black says.

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*We all have lessons to learn and learnings to teach
We are all living and breathing the breaths that form our future
Let us do it in unison
Pacing our hearts with the weakest in our tribe
Our tribe of humanity
One living and breathing entity
We are one
One person
One home
One family
One street
One neighbourhood
One town
One city
One country
One island
One world
One universe
We are one
As one, we are strong*



An excerpt from "Teach Me,"
by Cassandra "Kat" Golondrina,
Gilbert Park resident, single mother of five,
and self-described survivor of life.



Watch a video of this Day of Caring here:
http://www.unitedwaywinnipeg.mb.ca/comnews_1211.html

Read the *Free Press* story about this Day of Caring here:
<http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/our-communities/times/Gilbert-Park-going-green-with-new-garden-96914794.html>