“Urban Agriculture Attains Triumphs”

RULE Impact Article

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When I joined the Penn State Urban Extension (PSE) initiative in June 2022, I never imagined urban agriculture as my first project. My goal was creating healthy communities by bridging the gap between Extension and communities through science-based information, resources, and various learning opportunities. To assist with improving food access, availability and affordability; creating economic opportunities and providing relevant educational programming in urban communities, Penn State Extension has partnered with The Bridge Bleacher Garden and Wildheart | Love the Hill Ministries in Harrisburg, PA. I became a RULE XIX Scholar in the fall of 2022. Our Harrisburg Study Institute, June of 2023, gave me the opportunity to plan curriculum options. We were able to visit both of these projects I have been working with in my role with Penn State Extension.

The Bleacher Garden’s aim is to create sustainable and high yielding “foodscapes” throughout The Bridge Eco-Village Campus in Harrisburg (former Bishop McDevitt).

RULE XIX Feedback for The Bleacher Garden

• Thanks so much for welcoming us to your operation, and for sharing so much of your story with us.
• Garry, you are an amazing, talented community minded inspiration to us. Thank you for using your talents to help so many in our community.
• My rating is 15. I learned so much and was inspired by Garry. This was a great was to end our institute.
• How networking creates connections that build relationships.

“I learned from your inimitable speaking style how stories draw the audience in. I always valued Milton Hershey School but have new appreciation of how it changes lives, as you attributed Hershey School, your Mom and your brother, consistently throughout. I always had a hero worship for Coach Joe Paterno, and you underlined it. I learned so much about football and you pulled us into the gridiron with you. God bless you for making such an immeasurable difference in the lives of others to both pay it back and pay it forward.” ~ JD

The body language between Garry Gilliam and RULE Scholar Dr. Sandra Trejos communicates more than mere words.

RULE XIX Scholar, Robin Perry-Smith, pictured with host and Founder of The Bridge Project, Garry Gilliam.

RULE XIX at The Bleacher Garden
In fostering and enhancing trust, I consulted with various stakeholders around emerging community issues finding the common theme “food desert” in Allison Hill. The mission of, “Love The Hill,” Wildheart Ministries is to provide service and sponsorship opportunities for those who desire to impact their communities and see their cities transformed by the power of the Gospel. Wildheart is a transformative community of believers committed to empowering others to pioneer love in their cities and nations.

RULE XIX Scholars were hosted by Founders, Tannon & Cristina Herman, on site as they opened their home for us to have lunch, listen to their story and take a tour of the property and The Hill Farm.

RULE XIX Feedback for Wildheart Ministries
- Great examples of resourcefulness in service to others.
- I love how their work has evolved into many opportunities.
- Really passionate couple who believes in their mission. I appreciate their hospitality to allow us into their home and show us around.
- Thanks for welcoming us to your home and providing so many details about your work.
- I enjoyed meeting you all, and look forward to having Extension active in your program.

“Congrats, Robin, on your role through Extension and personal commitment to help with Love The Hill’s success! These are truly inspirational people doing simple things with amazing results to build and transform a community.”

~Joel Rotz, Farmer Liaison, Agriculture & Environment Center, Penn State

Amahl Pitts is a licensed insurance producer by trade. He is a life-long resident of Harrisburg and a graduate of The Milton Hershey School. Kerry MacDearmid is a farmer and traditionally trained educator, originally from New England. In 2021, Kerry and Amahl brainstormed about ways to help the city regarding its current food desert status. Together, in 2022, they garnered the support of over 130 volunteers and began the City FARM Project. They have since started TURF Inc., a non-profit organization, and are now in the business of working toward food equity for Harrisburg. In building a healthy future and with the power of partnership, in 2023, they worked with Wildheart | The Hill Farm to empower food security, educating individuals on food systems and celebrate innovation for self-sufficiency within South Allison Hill, Harrisburg, PA.

Kerry MacDearmid and Amahl Pitts
These farmers work in tandem on several farms at a time in the Harrisburg urban region.