

*In partnership with:*

Ohio State University Extension, Agriculture and Natural Resources Program, Montgomery County  
City of Dayton Planning & Community Development  
Wesley Community Center

## **The Harvest Peace Co.**

May 18, 2015- July 31, 2015

Dayton, OH

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### **Introduction**

I am from the west side of Dayton, OH—a predominantly Black community that has a per capita income of \$16,129, few banks or thriving businesses, and no fresh food grocers within a 5 mile radius (Wallace, 2013; Wasniak, Bergefurd, Nye, 2014; Wynn, 2011). Against the backdrop of this dire poverty, 38% of the Black adolescent population in Montgomery County, OH is arrested each year (Pan and Papanek, 2012). On October 5, 2014, *Dayton Daily News* reported that 150 juveniles had been booked for felony assault, theft or robbery in west Dayton (Frolik, 2014).

The causes of such violence are innumerable. My objective is to create a program that will address these factors based on the best practices found by social scientific research. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention posits that lack of empathy, poverty and social exclusion greatly contribute to youth violence in low-income communities (Resnick, Ireland, Borowsky, 2004). Some social psychologists find that violence and aggression are used as ways to protect an individual's self-concept. Violence is one form of defense commonly used among individuals who do not have a strong support group that constantly affirms her or his self-image (Baumeister, Bushman Campbell, 2000). Moreover, violence is used among individuals who lack empathy or reflexivity because they can neither identify with others' experiences nor understand how their actions affect others (Mehrabian, 1998).

A review of literature shows that ethnic entrepreneurship has been a way for marginalized groups to effectively insulate themselves from discrimination in the labor market, and this contributes to positive group image. These ethnic enterprises hire a significant percentage of minority workers who would otherwise be displaced in the larger job market. This reduces poverty in the community and strengthens group identification so that minorities feel more connected to their ethnic group and take greater pride in their community (Porter and Washington, 1993). Thus, Harvest Peace Co. project will promote peace and reduce youth violence in Dayton, OH by teaching disadvantaged youth how their cultural norms and values can map onto the larger social goals of mainstream USA. This program will empower youth to create opportunities within their community despite the restrictions caused by structural and systemic inequality.

The Harvest Peace Co. program will address factors related to poverty such as unemployment, economic immobility, and hunger, by teaching students how to grow their own food and generate income by selling their crops. They will learn empathy through gardening, discussing ethical issues focusing on stakeholders' interests (i.e food justice, corporate social responsibility, wealth distribution, etc), and donating to others. The intergenerational relationships developed through mentor-pairings will help to affirm students' self-images. Finally, the youth will feel more integrated and bonded with their community by helping their community and being celebrated by local residents during the final ceremony.

### **Program Design**

Twenty 6th-8th grade students from Wesley Center's youth program will participate in the Harvest Peace Co. 11-week program for three days each week, 2.5 hours per day. The site for this program is Wesley Community Center, where an underused community garden presently exists. Parents provide transportation for their children to attend Wesley Center's youth programs, and the program has had a high participation rate from parents and students in past years.

*May 18<sup>th</sup> - June 12<sup>th</sup>:* The Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener volunteers, youth participants and I will begin planting tomatoes and peppers so that the crops will be ready to harvest by the end of the program. The participants will spend 1 hour learning in a 'classroom' environment, 1 hour gardening, and 30 minutes debriefing about what they learn. This part of the program will concentrate on agricultural science. The Ohio State University Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Educators, Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener volunteers, and I will lead this part of the program. The students will learn about pesticides, how to test soil, and some of the challenges farmers are working to address. The students will also have a field trip to visit a research farm in South Charleston, OH.

*June 15<sup>th</sup> - July 3<sup>rd</sup>:* The program will integrate agricultural science and environmental policy. The students will learn about the impact of corporate farms to the environment. They will learn about the business ethics of environmentally-friendly farming, and the social importance of providing food in communities that lack access to fresh, healthy food. The students will learn about how government policy affects farmers and creates a need for innovative research in agricultural science.

*July 6<sup>th</sup> - July 24<sup>th</sup>:* The program will shift to emphasize business planning. The students will draft business proposals for their own urban farms using the worksheets provided by the US Environmental Protection Agency. Each week, we will have a successful entrepreneur speak during our 'classroom' time. The speaker will present one of the topics from our business planning curriculum (i.e. market research, pricing, distribution, etc) and help students understand how to apply these planning processes to an operational business. The speaker will also explain his/her path toward entrepreneurship and answer the students' questions.

*July 27<sup>th</sup> - July 31<sup>st</sup>:* The students will have a two-part final project. First, they will sell their crops by reaching out to local food kitchens, restaurants and/or going to the farmer's market. The students will donate all their profits to the Wesley Center's after school program. Second, the students will host a community event where they present what they have learned about urban farming to community members, discussing the ways in which the community can help expand urban farming in Dayton. After successfully completing this program, The Harvest Peace Co. will gift each participant with a \$50 gift card to show them the value of their hard work.

### **Program Evaluation**

I will adapt "ODCP Student Survey on Violence – Attitudes and Behaviors" pre and post surveys to assess students' behavioral and attitudinal changes related to violence over the course of this program. I will conduct brief knowledge and interest checks to determine if students are learning more and have a higher interest in college, business or STEM. This program will be successful if students engage in fewer instances of violence during the 11 week program; show lower levels of aggressive attitudes; show less accepting attitudes toward violence; have an increased interest in business, agricultural science, and environmental policy; and maintain contact with their mentors and Wesley Community Center once the program has ended.