



KEITH BEATY / TORONTO STAR

SAUCY LADY

Good food for all

Visiting community projects reveals how important fresh food is to everybody

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FOOD EDITOR

Don't forget the thanks in Thanksgiving this weekend.

Give thanks for your friends, family and health, of course. But give thanks to the farmers (hopefully they're from Ontario) who raised your turkeys and "grew" your side dishes and desserts (potatoes, brussels sprouts, corn, sweet potatoes, pumpkins and the like).

And, whether your meal is sparse or over-abundant, give thanks to the food security activists who strive to help everyone get fed.

Food security means being able to get the food you like, need and want. It means being able to get to a place to buy or grow food, and to do so in a way that doesn't embarrass you or make you feel ashamed. It's about being able to cook or prepare

your food, not being judged for your choices, and not worrying about going hungry.

This sobering concept — abstract to those of us who live in a world of plenty — was brought to life a few weeks ago on the Toronto Community Food Animators 3rd annual "Catalysts for Change" bus tour.

The animators (a partnership of FoodShare, Afri-Can Food Basket and the Stop Community Food Centre) took a busload of food/social housing/farm activists, policy makers, university students and even a couple of home-schooled kids to two community gardens and a "Good Food Market" to show how a little bit of money can create big change in people's lives.

The destinations were in North York and Scarborough, in what organizers call under-serviced "inner suburbs." Many of the animators' 22 projects aren't within walking distance of the myriad supermarkets, farmers' markets and culturally diverse grocery stores we take for granted downtown.

As Adriana Beemans from Toron-

to Community Housing reminded us, 164,000 people live in community housing (that's more than live on Prince Edward Island) and have an average income of \$14,000.

Stop one was a fledgling community garden contained in an obsolete swimming pool behind a community housing high-rise near Lawrence Ave. W. and Weston Rd.

Here, 17 tenants care for 23 small garden plots — each about the size of a couple of bathtubs. Besides growing enough fresh food to slash grocery bills, they've enjoyed getting to know each other, and feeling like they could linger outside the 326-unit Weston Bellevue community housing without being accused of loitering.

"This garden lets me feel I can have some connection with the outside," Doreen Bartley tells us. She grew tomatoes, callaloo, cabbage, lettuce, Jamaican hot peppers, corn and more, for herself and her two children.

Another tenant, Helder Pereira,



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Doreen Bartley loves escaping apartment life to her community garden.

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