Common Threads Farm

Practicum: Engaging Youth in Environmental Education and Sustainable Food Systems

Salary: Salary: $14.49 per hour, 240 hours throughout the course of the summer, averaging 24
 hours/week for 10 weeks

Supervisor: TBD

Period of Employment: June 6, 2022 – August 26, 2022 (start date is negotiable based on student’s finals schedule, student will be unavailable the week of June 13-17 due to place-based orientation)

**Overview**

Common Threads connects kids to healthy food in the garden, in the kitchen, and at the table. We want kids to grow up making food choices that are good for their bodies, their communities, and the environment. Founded in 2007 and based in Bellingham, Washington, Common Threads is a grassroots, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that promotes a “seed to table” approach to food production, good nutrition, and environmental stewardship.  Historically, most of our programs have taken place on public school grounds, during the school day.  Common Threads also runs after-school gardening and cooking programs at schools and low-income apartment complexes, and spring/summer camps at an urban farm site.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the many cracks and injustices in our food and social support systems. More families are depending more heavily than ever on emergency food support. Youth are feeling disconnected from their usual social and academic support systems.

This practicum will focus on the on-going revitalization of the Sterling Paz garden, located in the area of North Bellingham bound by the Guide Meridian, Bakerview Road, and I-5. This area is sorely lacking in parks, bike paths or other outdoor recreation resources. It is also home to many people who are working hard to support their families on extremely modest incomes.

This internship practicum will focus specifically on increasing food access, community building and outdoor enrichment opportunities for residents of Sterling Meadows, Villa Santa Fe, and Eliza Court (three affordable housing complexes, two of which focus specifically on farm worker housing.)

As Oran Hesterman has said in his book, Fair Food, "Our relationship to food is the most basic relationship we have with our environment, whether we are environmentalists or not." Access to a restful, productive garden space will be - for many of the residents we aim to serve - the best and most accessible opportunity they have to engage with nature consistently and conveniently in their home neighborhood.

Support for the Sterling Paz garden is a natural extension of Common Threads’ support of school gardens in Whatcom County since 2009. Bringing garden education to this well situated community garden represents a chance to engage not just youth but also their families in community building, learning, and food production.

**Responsibilities**

The intern will work collaboratively with Common Threads staff and AmeriCorps service members to develop, maintain, and provide programmatic leadership for a youth-education focused community garden within walking distance of  three affordable housing complexes (Sterling Meadows, Villa Santa Fe, and Eliza Court) with an aim to:

* Foster new, joyful, supportive relationships amongst residents at Sterling Meadows, Eliza Court, and Villa Santa Fe and between residents and the various support organizations engaged in the project.
* Increase access to healthy food
* Increase food sovereignty and food choice by prioritizing specific plants requested by residents
* Serve as a replicable model that other neighborhoods and groups might consider for building community and increasing food production, through reflection and documentation of best practices and lessons learned.

As available hours allow, the intern will also be invited to participate in other Common Threads summer programming and maintenance of school gardens.

**Required Qualifications and Experience**

* Ability to pass a background check (provided by Common Threads) for working with children
* Comfort and experience working with children
* Ability to get to various program sites by bus, bike, foot, or car
* Proficiency in Spanish a plus
* Experience with lesson planning a plus
* Comfort with social media a plus
* Members of BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities strongly encouraged to apply

**Educational/Professional Benefits**

* Opportunity to work with a vibrant, engaged team of educators
* Nonprofit experience
* Hands-on teaching experience
* Invitation to participate in all Common Threads trainings during, before and after internship (once part of the Common Threads family, always part of the Common Threads family!)