



PHOTO BY JOHN LARSON

FOG DAY AFTERNOON. About 80 people volunteered to create a garden on the campus of the University of Washington-Tacoma on Jan. 19.

A garden for a good cause at UWT

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Tacoma Weekly

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Published on: January 22, 2009

Students and staff at the University of Washington-Tacoma (UWT) gathered Jan. 19 to create a garden on campus that will produce fresh vegetables and fruit for people in need.

It was part of the college's observation of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. According to Kayomi Wada, the project aims to make the celebration of King's birthday an opportunity to do something positive.

Wada is a graduate student working on a master's degree in interdisciplinary studies, with an emphasis on Japanese-American and black community development in the Northwest.

Last year Wada was hired as a service learning coordinator. This work/study position has her bringing the college and community together.

"There has always been a want for a garden for the UWT community," Wada said. "For various reasons it just never got off the ground."

The volunteers built four raised beds. One will be for greens such as lettuce, cabbage and kale. Wada said these were chosen because they can be harvested in a short time, which means this bed should be quite

productive.

Another will be used for tomatoes, which will begin in the greenhouse on top of the science building. "They are hard to grow in this part of the state, so that is a challenge," Wada said. "We want to take advantage of the greenhouse we have on campus."

Raspberries and carrots will be planted, along with several apple trees.

All of the food harvested will be donated to Good Neighbor Café, a program of Tacoma Rescue Mission. It provides free, nutritious meals to homeless and low-income people.

Wada said this was chosen as the beneficiary because as the campus has expanded, it resulted in the removal of a building that once housed programs for the mission. This is a way for UWT to support the organization's purpose to help those in need. "We want to give back to the community that we are a part of," Wada remarked.

Wada had sent out e-mails to alert people about the volunteer opportunity. By Jan. 16 she had 40 people respond with a commitment. Two days later that number had swelled to around 100.

Wada directed some to other volunteer opportunities. Around 80 people showed up to work on the garden plot, which is located on a vacant lot near the intersection of South 19th Street and Fawcett Avenue.

The group included UWT students, professors and staff as well as people not affiliated with the school. "I was so impressed with the Tacoma community, coming out in such large numbers," Wada commented.

Wada is organizing a group of volunteers who will tend the garden this spring and summer. She thinks it would be an ideal learning opportunity for students in entomology classes, who can use the garden to study ways to control pests and weeds without using chemicals.

Betsy Baker, a downtown resident, said she volunteered because she enjoys gardening and supports the cause of providing good food for people in need. Baker felt it was a fitting way to honor King. "I would rather do this than listen to a speech," she remarked.

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