

Hope Blooms in Halifax



(Article adapted from information found at <https://hopeblooms.ca/impact/> - images from <https://hopeblooms.ca/impact/>)

Hope Blooms, where inner-city, at-risk youth grow organic herbs and other plants in order to make and sell amazing dressings, also grows:

- Relationships
- Hope
- Opportunities

The impacts of *Hope Blooms* are plenty, including increased food security, sense of community and belonging, and educational opportunities.

Food Security

Food security in Halifax has been greatly improved as a result of *Hope Blooms*. Imagine being part of a group that has grown over 9500 kilograms of organic vegetables and fruit for community members dealing with food insecurity, all free of charge?

- Each month, 260 healthy meals and 306 healthy snacks are given to community members in the Halifax inner city – all provided by *Hope Blooms*.
- In the nearby Annapolis Valley, *Hope Blooms* has worked to bring over 250 kilograms of organic produce to the 110 Syrian newcomers (formerly refugees) that now live in their community.
- The youth gave 15 garden plots to Syrian families in 2016 so they could grow food for their families.
- *Hope Blooms* held 87 cooking skills training workshops, 12 community suppers, and 210 free soup deliveries to seniors in the community in 2016.



Seniors and students enjoy a healthy meal together.

Sense of Community & Inclusion



A Syrian newcomer and her daughter water their garden plot.

***Hope Blooms* has helped many at-risk youth and others to feel like they are part of a supportive community.** Because of *Hope Blooms*, being given a garden plot has helped families to have their own healthy food. Community members have joined the gardening program and feel like they are connected to something of value. 53 youth, 12 seniors, and 35 families (including newcomer families from Syria) volunteer and grow food, relationships, and community. *Hope Blooms* has even shared their kitchen with newcomers from Syria who then sell baked goods at a local market, started a soup for seniors program, and donated produce to programs that feed the homeless.

Education

***Hope Blooms* not only educates youth in gardening and business, but it encourages youth to complete their education.** This has led to the youth involved gaining gardening, food preparation, marketing, and other job skills. *Hope Blooms* offers an after-school program for Junior Leaders and Youth Leaders of *Hope Blooms*.

Hope Blooms provides experiences that can lead to powerful job and university applications. In June 2016, the first *Hope Blooms* member, Mamadou Wade, graduated from high school. He received an \$8000 *Hope Blooms* scholarship and won \$70 000 TD Community Leadership Scholarship award so he could go to university. Four more *Hope Blooms* youth graduated from high school in 2018 and, like Mamadou, all will be the first in their families to go to college or university. Four *Hope Blooms* youth received their Master Organic Gardeners Certification – the youngest in Canada to receive this University credit. Alvero, one of the recipients, with *Hope Blooms* for the past 7 years, stated, “I have learned so much about life from agriculture and from ecosystems where everything from a micro-organism to a tomato plant has equal value and reverence.”



Alvero, who has been with Hope Blooms for seven years, receives his Master Organic Gardeners Certification.

The benefits of *Hope Blooms* are plentiful and obvious. The community, including seniors, homeless, and other vulnerable people, have increased food security. Mentors, students, and everyone who gets involved has a strong sense of community and belonging. Inner city youth gain educational opportunities and skills that have the potential to open even more doors in the future. I don't think anyone predicted the results of Jessie Jollymore's idea and the 2013 Dragon's Den presentation to extend as far and wide as they have. Hope continues to bloom in Halifax, Nova Scotia as the program continues to evolve.