

## **Gary / Glennys Doane**

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

How does your garden grow? Today we'll learn about a community garden in a rural Kansas community which has grown into more than a resource for produce. It has become a connector for the community. This is today's Kansas Profile.

Gary and Glennys Doane live west of Downs in Osborne County. Gary farms and Glennys is a longtime volunteer in the schools. They are involved with this innovative effort on the community garden.

For three seasons, a small garden had been grown on a volunteer's lot where vegetables were produced which went to the local food bank. Others in the community became interested in the potential of the garden and so a group of local citizens got involved.

Gary and Glennys Doane joined others in a strategic approach to enhancing the community garden. They formed a committee which adopted the following mission statement: "The Downs Community Garden exists to provide a nutritious food source, an opportunity for a healthy lifestyle, and a path for learning from each other in a setting available to the entire community."

The goals of the project were to provide fresh produce for those in need of assistance, to create an opportunity for community interaction (between garden members and the general community), to establish an educational opportunity for gardeners, youth, and the community at large about the source of one's food, to provide the opportunity to grow one's own healthy food, and to generate a positive impact on the town and community. The new community garden was officially established in 2016 and received 501 (c) 3 non-profit status.

A city lot was purchased to provide a more permanent home for the garden. In 2016, eleven 20'x20' plots were used by gardeners representing 13 households. Two additional plots were used to assist food bank clients and others in the community needing fresh produce.

The Dane G. Hansen Foundation, through an Osborne County grant, provided monies for start-up expenses in the new location. Signs were erected and fences were built to establish the location for the public and to keep rabbits from eating too much. After the first year, a garden shed for tools and equipment was purchased with Hansen Foundation funds and set in place. Four fruit trees have been ordered and will be planted on the west side of the property.

Gary Doane reported that the garden has been quite successful in accomplishing various goals. First of all, the garden produced cantaloupe, melons, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, beans, potatoes, zucchini, and corn. "A second goal was to build relationships," Gary said. "There was a grandmother and her fifth grade granddaughter who gardened together a lot," he said. "There was a man who had physical problems and the doctor said he couldn't walk. He worked in the garden and was walking by the end of the summer. The doctor said it's a miracle," Gary said.

Neighborhood beautification was another goal of the project. "We had a good relationship with the city," Gary said. "The city donated some extra vinyl fencing they had on hand. Other people donated piping for the water lines, and it looks good."

Gary believes that this project even helped encourage community leaders and created opportunity for civic and church groups to be engaged. The group established a Facebook page and a website to communicate with the public. A public tour and educational program were held one evening. In the fall, a celebration of harvest and thanksgiving was held for the gardeners and volunteers. This event included food grown in the garden.

“This is a quality of life enhancement for the community,” Gary said. It is a nice feature to have in a rural community like Downs, population 1,017 people. Now, that’s rural.

For more information, go to [www.downscommunitygarden.wordpress.com](http://www.downscommunitygarden.wordpress.com).

How does your garden grow? In Downs, the garden is growing well. We salute Gary and Glennys Doane and all those involved with the Downs Community Garden for making a difference with their efforts. This garden is growing lots of fruits and vegetables, but it is also growing something more: A sense of community. That is a wonderful harvest.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.