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Heidi Billimeier of the Rockwell City Food Pantry, Marilyn DeVries of the Lake City Food Pantry, Ruth Stephenson of the Lohrville Mass Garden and Joyce Berger of the Lohrville Mass Garden recently harvested vegetables in Lohrville.

Mass garden serves Lohrville and beyond

By Ken Ross
Graphic-Advocate Editor

A large garden, about an acre and a half, in Lohrville is producing a variety of vegetables for a food pantry started earlier this year, thanks to the volunteer efforts of Lohrville citizens. Food pantries in Lake City and Rockwell City are also benefiting from the Lohrville Mass Garden.

"I like to call it God's garden," Ruth Stephenson said.

Stephenson, along with Jane Simbro, were the primary founders of the Lohrville Food Pantry located in St. Joseph's Catholic Church. Simbro served as director of the food pantry and Stephenson has been the primary organizer of the garden. Simbro is taking on other projects and Joyce Berger has stepped in to take Simbro's place at the pantry and garden.

the food pantry itself, because of health department restrictions, so patrons pick up the vegetables at the garden. Delivery of fresh produce, as well as other food pantry items, is arranged for people with mobility issues. Stephenson said that the remainder of what was picked Thursday morning would be taken to a location at the side of Highway 175 (besides Casey's) and sold for free will donations to support the pantry.

"We're giving it to the food pantry first and for the extras we ask for a free will offering. That money will help the food pantry through the winter months," Stephenson said, "It all goes basically to the patrons of the pantry who are in need."

The mass garden also benefits the food pantry patrons in Lake City and Rockwell City, The directors of those pantries come to Lohrville for vegetables.

Gene Kinney donated the use of land for the pantry. Others have donated labor and equipment for tilling and other start-up activities. The weeding and harvesting chores have primarily been done by Stephenson and Berger. Stephenson noted that she does not use herbicides. Weed control is done by natural methods.

On a recent Thursday morning, the last day of July, Stephenson and Berger arrived at the flourishing garden to pick produce for patrons of the food pantry. In late July, the garden was at its peak in productivity and variety.

A few early vegetables such as radishes and spring onions were already finished and some later items such as pumpkins and melons were not ready yet but the garden was producing an abundance of sweet corn, red potatoes, zucchini, spinach, squash, green beans, peppers, onions and other items, as well as a few of the early tomato varieties.

The produce is not taken inside

"There's a great need out think in the winter months, will really come forward. W heating cost and expensive u there will be even greater Stephenson said.

"The way our food pantry w that once a month you can cor get service from the pantry its with the produce it's every she added.

(Ruth Stephenson's num 712-465-5090.) Further infor is on the massgarden faceboo

Stephenson said that she couple of lots selected if they to expand next year.

"I come from a large fami Joyce comes from a large f I'm sure we both had large ga There's something about g your fingers in the dirt back memories. Helping oth something every community s do because everybody has times in their lives when they need," Stephenson said.

An impressive garden

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Ruth Stephenson and Joyce Berger put in mahy volunteer hours at the Lohrville Mass Garden.

Harvesting potatoes

Heidi Billimeier of the Rockwell City Food Pantry and Marilyn DeVries of the Lake City Food Pantry, recently harvested red potatoes at the Mass Garden in Lohrville.