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Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women joins Hope Garden effort to fight community hunger during COVID-19 Pandemic

BELFAIR— Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity has increased in communities across the state.

The [Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women](#) has a plan to help: The Corrections Hope Gardens.

The Department of Corrections has launched plans to expand its gardening projects for incarcerated individuals statewide to allow facilities to increase the amount of produce they donate to local food banks and community kitchens.

“The Corrections Hope Gardens give individuals incarcerated in Washington correctional facilities an opportunity to give back to their communities at a time when it’s needed the most,” said Corrections Secretary Stephen Sinclair. “It also gives them a chance to learn about gardening, a skill they can use when they return home to restart their lives.”

According to the [WA Food Fund](#), a relief fund created to support food banks and pantries across Washington, 1.6 million people are at risk of not having enough food to eat -- double the number of people than before the virus outbreak.

MCCCW currently has 14 existing on-site vegetable gardens that encompass a total of 720 square feet. In recent weeks, the facility added two more raised gardens and plans to add six more that will bring the total garden space to 2,000 square feet. The facility will use some of the produce grown in the facility dining room then donate a large portion to the community food bank.

In 2018, incarcerated women at MCCCW grew more than 1,300 pounds of produce that was divided among its prison kitchen and the North Kitsap Food Bank.

Partners include Master Gardeners’ programs, community colleges, universities, local conservation districts, private businesses and other state agencies.

While many correctional programs have been curtailed or suspended to prevent the spread of COVID-19, gardening is one program facilities have been able to continue, thanks to knowledgeable staff at each facility. DOC gardening project officials say the projects help ease stress and give those

incarcerated in Washington facilities a sense of meaning and purpose as well as fresh produce with their meals.

“The Corrections Hope Gardens won’t just provide hope to families hungry for fresh, locally grown produce,” Sinclair said. “They will give opportunity to individuals eager to make a difference.”

The Department of Corrections currently has 19 acres of prison gardens statewide, and it’s putting another 100+ acres into production this spring.

Working with the [Sustainability in Prisons Project](#), SPP, corrections staff and other partners, incarcerated gardeners statewide grew more than 246,000 pounds of food in 2018 for prison kitchens and community pantries, according to [SPP](#). Throughout the year, facilities donate food to local community food banks, nonprofits, tribes, elementary schools and childcare centers.

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ABOUT MISSION CREEK CORRECTIONS CENTER FOR WOMEN: Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women is a minimum-custody level prison located in Belfair, Washington that has a housing capacity of 321 female inmates.