

# Mass in Motion: Stories from the Field

## Growing a Healthy Franklin Community from the Ground Up

**W**e live in a time when oversized portions are the norm and obesity rates are through the roof – but don't be fooled. Not everyone has enough to eat. In Massachusetts, almost 1 in 10 households have trouble accessing healthy foods. People who don't have easy access to healthy food are more likely to be overweight, and have a higher risk for diabetes and heart disease.

With this in mind the Franklin MiM team, *Healthy Futures Franklin* dug in their heels, picked up their shovels, and decided to build a community garden. A community garden would provide Franklin with fresh and affordable healthy fruits and veggies; a way to get to know friends and neighbors; and a learning experience for families struggling with poor nutrition.

Using local newspapers, flyers, email blasts, and open forum meetings the team recruited new, passionate members who helped spread the garden news through word of mouth and social media outlets, including a blog ([www.franklincommunitygardens.org](http://www.franklincommunitygardens.org)). *Healthy Futures Franklin* formed a land committee and searched for

both town-owned land and private property. Before donating any land, the Town of Franklin required the team to establish five different things:

- » A steering committee.
- » Funding to cover the costs of building and running the garden.
- » Established rules for acceptable foods.
- » Fees for plots and water use.
- » An approved plan for the layout of the garden.



Three young children explore the new community garden.

When all the requirements were met, *Healthy Futures Franklin* recruited community volunteers to build all of the garden beds. Following a ribbon cutting, all residents, organizations and food pantry volunteers began planting. Seedlings were sold at a very low cost

by Grateful Farms, a local farm in Franklin, which also donated most of the food pantry beds. "The communities' passion and vision for a community garden has moved us from conversation to action," says *Healthy Futures Franklin* coordinator Lauren Marciszyn. "Without the partnerships and collaborations, a garden would still be just an idea."

A town committee oversees the rules, regulations, disputes, and the garden lottery system, and office hours are available all summer to anyone with questions about gardening. Additionally, Our Friends of Franklin Community Gardens was formed to oversee fundraising for sustainability and expansion as well as educational workshops and opportunities.

The Franklin Community Garden now consists of 46 active raised garden beds assigned through a lottery system. Several of the garden beds are wheelchair accessible, another four provide food for the Franklin Food Pantry, and the remainders are for individuals and groups. Franklin residents that are now knee-deep in fruits and veggies view the Community Garden as a great way to improve their health and bring a much-needed sense of community to the town.

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