But what are the physical and mental benefits of gardening?

Benefits range from saving on grocery bills, avoiding pesticides, eating healthy, having fresh herbs at your fingertips, or serving your family fresher produce that hasn’t travelled across the country and become nutritionally depleted from the journey—not to mention the benefits of getting back to the great outdoors.

Studies have found that when we exchange our sterile, indoor environs for our natural surroundings, we benefit. For instance, being in natural places can improve our outlook, help us cope with stress, restore our concentration and improve our productivity.

In addition, gardens can be areas for recreation and exercise. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests that all adults should set a goal of at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each day of the week. Doing so can reduce the risk of obesity, high blood pressure, type-2 diabetes, osteoporosis, heart disease and stroke.

Gardens can also increase your property value and save money when grocery shopping. With so many benefits, only one question remains: How do you get started?

Gretchen Lea, area interior designer and Penn State Master Gardener, offers the following steps:

• Choose a spot that gets sun, whether that is in-ground, container or raised beds.
• Check soil conditions to make sure it’s not too soggy. Too much water or even overwatering later is one of the biggest mistakes made and can quickly lead to an unsuccessful gardening experience.
• Use compost to balance your soil. A good resource, says Lea, is ESPOMA natural gardening products.
• Start growing, whether from seeds, plants or both.

A great resource for beginners and experts is the Penn State Extension, an educational network that gives all of Pennsylvania’s counties access to the University’s resources and expertise. For instance:

• Reference detailed guides meant to make your gardening experience successful
• Find everything from tips on beekeeping to deterring rabbits from making your garden their tasty snack
• Do you have a desire to become a Master Gardener? Learn more about what goes into basic training

Let’s Get Growing!

When you watch or read the news, you most likely see stories about how people are getting back-to-basics and planting vegetable and herb gardens. You hear about free neighborhood gardens, rooftop gardens, organic gardens, urban gardens, children’s gardens, and more.
Welcome spring! The last reminders of a particularly cold winter have at last melted away in favor of longer days, warmer temperatures and a desire to get back outdoors. To that end, we hope you embrace all of what the Pottstown area has to offer.

The area’s calendar of events will keep you busy in the next couple months. Just a few of the upcoming activities include:

- May 17: 5K Challenge Run starting at Riverfront Park in Pottstown
- June 6-12: The 17th Annual Schuylkill River Sojourn
- June 25-28: The 24th Annual Pottstown Volleyball Rumble
- July 11: Sly Fox Track Club Half Marathon

If running a 5K or half marathon isn’t for you, consider participating in the Mercury Mile, a weekly walk hosted by an area organization or business that promotes walking as a free fitness option.

Of course, that’s in addition to Pottstown celebrating its bicentennial. There are big things happening in our community! We hope you find active and healthy ways to enjoy them.

David W. Kraybill, President

Another resource, which is right in our own backyard, comes from the MOSAIC Community Land Trust. Currently, the group runs two community gardens in downtown Pottstown, located at 423 and 615 Chestnut Streets. Laura Washington, community gardens manager for MOSAIC Community Land Trust, said, “It’s a great way for families who live in town to garden. It’s a place where people can connect, and it offers an outlet where they can be expressive.”

MOSAIC supplies water, tools, seeds, seedlings and resources to those who sign up for one of the organization’s 50+ plots. There is a small annual fee of between $30 and $55 (dependent on salary) per plot for individuals or $110 per plot for businesses.

In addition, MOSAIC hosts a garden contest open to all residents of the Pottstown borough. The contest has just launched and offers cash prizes across four garden categories. Interested? Check out the full-page flyer and register today!
Gardening at Home… And in Your Neighborhood

It’s no secret that gardening is among the top hobbies enjoyed by many in the region and around the country. Nothing compares to the taste of homegrown food or the beauty of your very own flower garden! It’s with that in mind that the Foundation launches its latest series of webisodes.

Each 10-minute webisode introduces viewers to an informative and educational discussion covering a variety of gardening topics:

- **Community Gardens & 2015 Garden Contest** features a conversation with Laura Washington, community gardens manager for Mosaic Community Land Trust, along with area resident and past winner of Mosaic’s garden contest, Robin Pineda. They discuss the benefits of community gardens—as well as entering the garden contest!

- **Why Plant a Garden** features Gretchen Lea, interior designer and Penn State Master Gardener. Not only does she express the physical and mental benefits of gardening, she also explains how beginners can easily get started.

- **Why Plant Organic** continues with Lea, who explains what beginner or expert gardens should keep in mind when it comes to organic gardening.

- **How to Manage Your Garden** continues with Washington, who talks about the area’s community gardens, how to sign up and how to manage your garden (whether it is part of the community garden or part of your backyard).

An upcoming webisode that will be filmed live during Mosaic’s May planting days. Look for this video coming soon.

Foundation Success Stories

When was the last time you enjoyed fresh vegetables, having only moments before pulled them from the earth with your own hands? Today, it’s a pleasure that’s become more and more rare. But it’s one that the Mosaic Community Garden hopes to rectify. David Jackson, president of the organization’s board of trustees, shared his own personal account with a young boy enjoying his first taste of a radish. “We warned him that radishes are a little hot, so he took a small bite,” said Jackson. “When I asked him if he liked it, he took a bigger bite and said, ‘Yes!’”

Interested in reading more? Check out the complete article [here](#).

Summer is just around the corner—and with it will come the second annual On Your Park, Get Set, Go!™ contest. This program gives municipalities the opportunity not only to showcase area parks, but also to improve them. The contest will run throughout July. At the end of the month, the park with the most votes will receive a $10,000 grant from the Foundation, second place will receive $7,500, third place will receive $5,000, and all remaining parks will be entered into a lottery with one lucky park receiving $2,500.

With so many amazing parks available throughout the surrounding area, we hope to highlight the many assets that are often just a walk or short drive away.

Our next Community Benefit Report will feature the parks in the contest, as well as how you can vote for your favorite this summer.

Stay tuned!
Paving the Way for Early Education in Pottstown

All children should have an equal opportunity to thrive. That's the mission of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, an organization that works with communities to help vulnerable children realize their full potential in school, work and life.

It's a mission that tracks closely with a well-respected group in Pottstown known as PEAK, or Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten Readiness. PEAK's overarching goal is to ensure that all children in Pottstown enter kindergarten ready to learn.

In part, the fact that their missions are so closely aligned is why earlier this year, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation awarded Pottstown Schools with a $1,250,000 grant, to be spread over three years. The grant will fund the efforts of the district and partners to improve educational opportunities for children from pre-K to the third grade.

An area that will continue to receive the organization's focus is “trauma-informed practices” in schools, especially to combat adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). ACEs are traumatic experiences that occur before the age of 18 and that people remember into adulthood. They can include:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Verbal abuse
- Mental illness of a household member
- Substance abuse by a household member
- Divorce or separation of parents
- Domestic violence toward a parent
- Incarceration of a household member

A National Trend: From Awareness to Action

According to a report by the Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School, more and more educators are recognizing that addressing trauma's impact on learning creates enormous opportunity to help students learn and be successful. Their challenge is in moving from the awareness stage to action. Changing the culture of a school requires commitment across the entire staff.

For Pottstown schools, however, an advocate is already in place with the work that PEAK has done and will continue to do in the future.

Why does early learning matter?

- If families and caregivers can provide quality early childhood development, then children will start school ready to learn.
- If children start school ready to learn, they are more likely to read at grade level by 3rd grade.
- If children read at grade level by 3rd grade, they are more likely to graduate from high school.
- If children graduate from high school, they are more likely to go on to higher education and/or enter the job market as a tax-paying citizen.
- Employable tax-paying citizens are critical to a vital economy.

Courtesy of PEAK. Download their brochure.

www.pottstownfoundation.org
Save the Date

What: Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Institute
When: August 4 & 5, 2015
Time: Registration opens at 7:30 a.m. Welcome and opening Plenary start at 8:15 a.m.
Where: The Hill School in Pottstown, PA

In just a few short months, school administrators and office staff, as well as teachers, nurses and related professionals, will converge on the campus of The Hill School to attend the 2015 Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Institute, sponsored by the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation. Leading neuroscientists, educators and psychologists will present research and practical knowledge for participants to creatively incorporate movement into their teaching practices. Many of the sessions require active participation. In other words, this is not your typical conference! If you are an educator and are interested in attending, review our registration guide and register today!

Or, questions may be directed to Laura DeFlavia at ldeflavia@pottstownfoundation.org or 610-323-2006, x24.

“Foundations of Life” Blog with Dr. Laurie Betts

Find inspiration and advice by following Dr. Betts as she discusses family life, exercise, nutrition and more. She will cover topics everyone can relate to, so join in the conversation and share your successes and your challenges.

In addition, two Foundation guest bloggers are also joining the mix. Look for posts from both Lindsey Patience and Skye Tulio.

Lindsey is creative, energetic and a little quirky. In addition to her duties as a Grants Assistant, she is also a Certified Personal Trainer with a specialization in core strengthening, nutrition guidance, strength and endurance training, and women’s fitness.

Skye is a 2014 graduate of St. Bonaventure University and holds a bachelor’s degree in journalism and mass communication. She is currently completing her master’s degree in integrated marketing communications through the University’s 4 + 1 program and will graduate in May.

Click here to read the latest from our bloggers today!

PottstownFoundation.org

Here at the Foundation, we are all about helping people improve their health and well-being. That includes having a website that is easy for visitors to navigate—whether they are interested in applying for a grant, learning more about the initiatives we support or finding helpful resources.

We invite you to take a moment and visit www.PottstownFoundation.org.

A few highlights include:

- Detailed and easy-to-follow guidelines meant to make the grantmaking process easier. Whether it’s promoting healthy living through healthy eating or active living, or providing accessible and quality health care, we look forward to hearing from you.
- Whether you are interested in the latest news from the Foundation, downloads of insightful studies and reports, links to a variety of Healthy Living resources, and more, our Resource section can help.
- Learn more about the Foundation—including its mission, its staff and its history.
- Find out how the Foundation connects to the community through a number of initiatives and collaboratives.

Let us know what you think!