Garden Club keeps food pantry shelves stocked

Brenda Abisch, who runs the Heritage Hills pantry program, Garden Club President Lenore Weiss, Linda Lansky, Judy Rubin and Linda Higgs with the total produce for July 29.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RON MEYERSON

View of the Heritage Hills Gardens

Heritage Hills group has donated 1,600 pounds of food since 2010

BY BOB DUMAS
FOR THE SOMERS RECORD

Four years ago, members of the Heritage Hills Garden Club were taking a walk through the gardens in their condo community when they noticed something disturbing.

"There were tomatoes all over, zucchini that was over-grown, and cucumbers that had gone to seed," said club member Judy Rubin. "We said, 'This is bad. We should find a way to contribute and share [the excess vegetables] with people who have a need.'"

Club members quickly decided to have a "harvesting day" and take the extra produce to a place where it could be given away. That place turned out to be the Community Center of Northern Westchester, which operates a food pantry that serves 37 communities and 1,800 families throughout the region.

The Heritage Hills Garden Club has over 140 100-square gardens on its ground, which are assigned to individuals living in the community. Some gardeners grow vegetables, others grow flowers, and some grow both. Those who wish to participate in the food pantry project can sign up on a voluntary basis and donate as much produce as they wish on a weekly basis.

"It's an individual's space and there's an annual fee for them to join," said Brenda Abisch, coordinator for the club's food pantry committee. "It's their bed and whatever they want to donate is totally voluntary."

Rubin, who was the first food pantry coordinator when the program started in June 2010, said the club harvested every other week

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