



## Atlanta INTown

# Garden for the Hungry

By Anne Boatwright — February 2, 2011

Tucked back in an unassuming meadow off a busy thoroughfare in Buckhead grows a little garden plot that helps feeds the homeless at Crossroads Community Ministries in Downtown Atlanta.

Its name is the Garden for the Hungry, and it is nestled within the larger collection of plots that make up the organic community garden in the Blue Heron Nature Preserve. The Preserve, part of Park Pride's network of community gardens, began in 2000 on a mere 7 acres and now spans a 25-acre area of urban green space along Nancy Creek.

In 2006, the BHNP Community Garden opened to willing gardeners and now sports 32 active plots with a waiting list. Garden member Sue Certain was asked three years ago by the garden's founder and president Kevin McCauley to take the "Plant a Row for the Hungry" challenge, initiated by the Atlanta Community Food Bank.

Atlanta gardeners were encouraged to plant one extra row of vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers in their gardens and then donate surplus produce to one of the drop-off sites of hunger-relief organizations throughout metro Atlanta. Certain found a willing recipient in Crossroads Community Ministries, a 40-year-old organization that feeds 74,000 meals per year to hundreds of homeless men, women and children on the property of St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

After speaking with Crossroads' Executive Director Stan Dawson, she felt it was the right match. Spearheading and managing this project became Certain's mission and she has overseen the gardeners' efforts in planting, tending and harvesting, and has personally transported the produce on a regular basis to the warm and friendly kitchen of Chef Clyde Corbin at Crossroads.



Each growing season throughout the year, the G4H plot, as it's called by the gardeners, is tilled over and new vegetables are planted. Certain regularly solicits fellow gardeners for crop overstocks from their own plots and sometimes carts in excess of 20 pounds of fresh, chemical-free, organic food to the shelter in a single trip.

One of the most heartening aspects of this project is embracing the opportunity to add a natural component to the canned food staples that stock much of the shelter's pantry. The shorter time span between grower and end-user makes for the most nutritionally viable produce. Chef Corbin, a former military cook, appreciates the high quality of food and the spirit in which it's given throughout the year.

Of the Garden's regular donations, Dawson remarked, "Each time Sue brings produce, it's that much less I take out of our food budget for the kitchen. And nutritional food is extra important because for many guests, this is the one meal they will get that day."

For more information, visit [crossroadsatlanta.org](http://crossroadsatlanta.org) and [bhnp.org](http://bhnp.org).