



## A Step in the Right Direction: King's College student brings new growth to campus by Leanne Mazurick

*A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step –Lao Tzu*

According to some sources, a more correct translation of this familiar saying would be "A journey of a thousand miles begins *beneath* one's feet." Both versions could hardly be more true for Patrick Murray, senior environmental student at King's College in Wilkes-Barre, PA (USA). When Patrick began his environmental journey at King's, he could not have known that by his senior year, he would have taken major steps to educate the college community on the importance of urban gardening and create an urban garden on campus.

Early on, Patrick became involved in a college community outreach project in the Wilkes-Barre Community Garden, teaching children from nearby low-income housing units the benefits of gardening and growing their own food. Patrick met with them weekly – explaining how plants grow and helping them sow seeds, plant their seedlings and finally harvest the fruits of their labor.

This project led Patrick to think about the King's College campus community. Because the city's garden was a 10-minute walk from campus, he suspected many people never actually saw the garden and weren't being exposed to the benefits of growing one's own food, especially in an urban setting. Patrick, on the other hand, understood its significance: "From my environmental studies and all of my work in gardens, I knew the importance of urban gardening - how it reduces our carbon footprint on Earth and improves our health."

So, with the help of his professor, Dr. Garrett Barr, he applied for a service-learning grant to

bring urban gardening to campus. One of the challenges of an *urban* setting is always shortage of green space. After some research, Patrick devised a plan to build containers from recycled materials for planting vegetables and flowers. He hoped that an added benefit of container gardening would be its mobility and potential visibility throughout the campus.



Patrick Murray, King's College senior in environmental studies, admires the fruits of his labor.

Though Patrick ran into a few obstacles along the way, he agrees that the first year of the project was an unqualified success:

"I got to meet and work with so many different groups on campus. In addition to learning a lot more about other people at the College, it was also great hearing good things about the garden

from others. It was also terrific walking over to the garden and noticing that someone had taken a cucumber, or that a couple of tomatoes were missing (and not lying on the ground half eaten by a squirrel!). The fact that people were coming up to the garden and checking out the plants, and picking what was ripe was really rewarding.”

With an AmeriCorps VISTA member now helping coordinate the Wilkes-Barre Community Garden project and the College administration in support of urban gardening on campus, Patrick is optimistic about King’s environmental future: “My project, in itself, is just a small effort to raise awareness on campus and in the surrounding community.

But when combined with the *Green Initiative* and future plans for gardening and other environmental projects around campus, it will make a profound mark on the King’s community.”

*Written by: Leanne Mazurick, Director of Volunteer Services – one of several founding members of The Green Initiative at King’s College - The Green Initiative at King’s College strives to promote social responsibility by fostering greater environmental awareness and action among members of the King’s College community.*

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