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Alumni Profile

Producing aplenty

Mary McClure might have one of the smallest backyards in her Kansas City, Mo., neighborhood, but she optimizes every inch. Not much grass grows on her plot, which instead is overtaken by blackberry vines and rows of tomatoes, okra, eggplant, lettuce and kale. McClure's neighbors and friends have long reaped the benefits of her vegetable garden, but her latest endeavor expands food sharing beyond her social circle.

As chair of the board of directors for Harvesters food bank, McClure manages the Harvesters Demonstration Garden, where people learn how to cheaply and easily grow their own fruits and vegetables. The garden donates its crops to the food bank and encourages participation in the campaign Plant A Row for the Hungry, in which gardeners donate their extra produce to Harvesters. The food bank serves 26 counties and feeds as many as 66,000 people each week. Feeding America, the nation's food bank network, named Harvesters the 2011 Food Bank of the Year.

"Our goal is to have a pot on every porch, a plot on every block," McClure, BS HE '76, says. "It's a great way to expose people to gardening. Five or 10 years ago, it was common not to know anyone with a



After 20 years with Hallmark Cards, Mary McClure, BS HE '76, now manages the Harvesters Demonstration Garden in Kansas City, Mo., where she leads the board of directors for Harvesters food bank. Photo by Rob Hill

garden. Now, the interest in local food has exploded, and everyone is doing a little something.”

McClure, who volunteers as a Missouri Master Gardener, says schoolyard gardens are increasing, and she helps Country Club Christian Church plant edible landscaping rather than annual flowers.

McClure grew up on a farm outside Sedalia, Mo., and spent much of her career growing company profits, not crops. After earning a master’s degree from Harvard Business School, she embarked on a 20-year career with Hallmark Cards, where she served as a vice president and general manager. In 2005, she founded McClure Management Consulting. Although she still spends a significant chunk of time in meetings, McClure says consulting has given her the opportunity to help nonprofit organizations, the extra time to plant several vegetable varieties and the delight of working in the fresh air and sunshine. — *Stephanie Detillier*

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