

The Homestead

Truly Unique

The Homestead CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) is more than a Certified Naturally Grown farm. This 6-acre farm provides jobs for individuals with autism; produces nutritious vegetables and fruit for central Iowa families; and contributes to the quest to live green by reducing the carbon footprint.

The CSA program is a way for individuals and families to purchase a “share” in the crops harvested on the farm. The Homestead has more than one hundred CSA members that receive a weekly box of fresh produce throughout the season, typically 20 weeks for this farm.

The farm helps develop and maintain paid, meaningful work for people who would otherwise have few opportunities to be gainfully employed. Supervised by Autism Associates, The Homestead’s CSA is staffed by residents. All 24 residents are paid for the work that they do on the farm and on the Campus.

More than thirty varieties of fruits and vegetables are grown at the farm. The Homestead specializes in growing several lettuce varieties inside their 5,000 foot greenhouse. This gives them the opportunity to sell lettuce to restaurants and grocery stores during the winter months. In addition, the greenhouse provides the means to raise custom grown bedding plants for customers and transplants for the farm. Christmas wreaths, poinsettias, compost and greenhouse rental spaces are also sold on site to augment income.

In the past 5 years while operating with the same number of staff, the Homestead CSA has more than doubled membership. Marketing efforts include membership in the Iowa Food Cooperative, word of mouth, posters and rack cards at local businesses, attending local events, paid local advertising and e-mail campaigns.

The income earned from the CSA project goes directly to pay the wages for those that work for the farm.

A few local corporations also provide financial and volunteer support during the busiest times of the year.



Eric Ambrecht, Vocational Director

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