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Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership -- Slayton

\$120,000 project support to improve community engagement through a Sustainable Housing Creative-in-Residence pilot as part of the Rural Placemaking Program in rural Minnesota

Contact

Jenn Lamb - Director of Resource & Program Development

jennl@swmnhp.org

507-836-1621

<https://www.swmnhp.org/>

Solace Community Gardens in St. Peter, rooted in arts-centered community development, grows community connections

The Solace Community Gardens began with a conversation, not about gardening, but about what it means to feel at home. As residents of Solace Apartments, an 30 unit development for people exiting treatment or incarceration, worked alongside artists to build community, common themes emerged. Many spoke about the challenge of stretching limited food benefits through the month. Others shared a desire for an outdoor space where they could work with their hands, connect with neighbors, and create something together. Those conversations sparked a vision that residents and artists developed side by side, ultimately becoming the Solace Community Gardens.

The gardens are more than raised beds. They are intentionally designed to nourish both people and community, with fruit trees, vegetables, flowers, gathering spaces, café tables, a porch swing, and natural play elements woven throughout. Residents harvest fresh produce, children explore and imagine among the tree stumps, and neighbors gather in a space they helped create. The impact has extended beyond Solace. Seeing the gardens strengthen resident engagement, wellness, and community pride inspired us and our property management team to establish a second community garden at another property and to begin seeking resources to expand gardens across additional sites. What started as an arts-based conversation about belonging has grown into a representation of our organizational commitment to creating places where people and communities can flourish.

Photos

[preparing Homestead 2.jpg](#)

[Solace Garden stumps.jpg](#)

[Preparing Homestead garden.jpg](#)

[Garden kickoff at Homestead.jpg](#)

[Food survey at Homestead.jpg](#)



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[*Solace food project creative survey.JPG*](#)

[*watering solace garden.png*](#)

[*Solace raised beds.png*](#)