

## Chesapeake Donates Garden to Nonprofit for Community Use

The 2.5-acre, 65-bed garden owned by Chesapeake is getting new life through a partnership with a local nonprofit organization.

Chesapeake has gifted the Lynn Institute a five-year renewable lease to restore the garden to its natural beauty and use as a space for the community. The partnership was announced Thursday at a grand opening of the garden, which will now be known as the Lynn Institute Community Garden at Chesapeake.

“I want to thank Chesapeake for their support and trusting us with this project,” said Lynn Institute CEO Steve Petty. “I’m excited about the possibilities and potential the garden will have for Oklahoma City and the surrounding areas, and we hope it will serve as a model for other urban areas to use throughout the country.”

The Lynn Institute, a nonprofit committed to serving under-resourced neighborhoods, plans to transform the garden into a hub for community involvement, focusing on family centered events, health and nutrition initiatives, cooking classes and gardening workshops. The Lynn Institute has hired a director of Community Gardens to oversee the renovation, and efforts are underway to restore the garden beds, cultivate crops and harvest food for the benefit of the city.

The space also will host specialized programs to enhance the community’s well-being. One current initiative is a collaboration with the Oklahoma County Juvenile Bureau to have teenagers from the program get their service hours by working at the garden, fostering a sense of purpose around giving back to the community.

Lynn Institute Board of Directors member Kersey Winfree, MD, spoke at the grand opening, highlighting the community garden model and what it does for the community.



*Lynn Institute Board of Directors member Kersey Winfree, MD, spoke at the grand opening of the garden on Thursday, highlighting the positive impact of a community garden.*



*Communications and Community Affairs Manager Brooke Coe accepts the Lynn Institute's 2023 Community Champion Award for our partnership with the garden at a ceremony last month.*

“Gardens are a source of health when you think about the amount of work that goes into it and the food and nutrients that come from it,” he said. “Happiness comes from gardens, when you think about the social connectivity a garden does for someone individually and as groups. Another thing that comes from that is hope. The garden brings an enduring message of hope that we all can align on.”

Chesapeake established the garden in April 2010 for employees but has not been able to maintain the garden due to a shift in focus in recent years.

In early 2022, a representative from the Lynn Institute reached out to Communications and Community Affairs Manager Brooke Coe and Director of Corporate Facilities Kent Hanebaum to inquire about the garden and its status. After several discussions and learning about the Lynn Institute’s thorough plan to rehabilitate the garden, Chesapeake agreed to donate the space to the non-profit organization.

The partnership earned Chesapeake the Lynn Institute’s 2023 Community Champion Award at a ceremony last month.

“One thing we have been impressed with is how the Lynn Institute has managed this process. They developed a plan, put passion behind it, started working with their board, got the right people involved, and then we all moved forward together,” Brooke said. “I really think because of Lynn and the involvement from their staff and board, the garden will thrive. We’re really excited about the future.”

In addition to the garden space, Chesapeake will provide security, water, electricity and maintenance, and the Lynn Institute will seek support from other organizations and volunteers to help the organization achieve the full purpose of the garden.

“A project of this magnitude needs volunteers who want to lend their talents, but it will also need funding to make the dream a reality,” Steve said. “We also need individuals, foundations, and other contributors to come alongside us and provide needed funding for what will be a community space that offers beauty, engagement, food, health experiences, educational opportunities and more.”

*The public is invited to get involved through volunteering, learning or just enjoying. To learn more, reach out to [garden@lynninstitute.org](mailto:garden@lynninstitute.org).*