

DAILY NEWS

Crotona Park East Residents at Intervale Green Grow Their Own Dinner on Their Rooftop Farm

Bronx building residents start planting their plots of vegetables and herbs on the roof

By [Kerry Wills](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Tuesday, April 30, 2013, 6:00 AM

Benito Quezada used to pick mangos and oranges on his grandfather's farm in the Dominican Republic.

When he learned he could garden on the roof of his South Bronx affordable housing complex, he jumped at the chance....

The Quezadas are one of 16 families tending their own rooftop farm plots at Intervale Green, which opened in 2009 in Crotona Park East and launched the farm a year later with a \$40,000 grant from United Way.



Richard Harbus/for NY Daily News

Resident Benito Quezada turns over one of his vegetable plots.



Richard Harbus/for NY Daily News

Shantel Epps smells some mint that survived the winter.

"Last year we grew 800 pounds of vegetables right on this roof," said Erin Burns-Maine, a program manager for the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation, (WHEDco), which built Intervale Green.

The 128-unit complex at 1330 Intervale Ave. is the nation's largest Energy Star-certified affordable housing development.

Besides producing food, the farm offers a social outlet for residents, including 39 families from city homeless shelters.

Karen Epps said her son, Donovan, 12, loves to garden.

“I got him into this just to keep him out of trouble,” said Epps, 39. “Now this is his thing. He likes basketball, but he loves this.”

The tween has a crew of friends who farm with him. They grow collard greens, tomatoes, lettuce, eggplant and green peppers.

WHEDco is raising money to build a greenhouse in the courtyard for incubating seeds and growing veggies year-round. Deutsche

Bank has offered to match donations dollar-for-dollar.

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A WHEDCO program manager, Erin Burns walks on the rooftop farm gardens at 1330 Intervale Ave.