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HERSHEY, PA -- Representatives from five Hershey organizations recently celebrated the beginning of work on the Hershey Community Garden, slated for completion this fall on the campus of Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.

The group helped install a sign marking the garden location and shoveled dirt into one of the completed raised planting beds.

Located in the heart of the greater Hershey community, the garden will provide community residents a place to both grow crops and cultivate friendships. Plans include providing onsite educational opportunities, hands-on gardening demonstrations, and garden festivals. The garden is the first joint project of "Hershey Impact," a group of representatives from the five Hershey entities—[The Hershey Company](#), [Milton Hershey School](#), [Penn State Hershey Medical Center](#), [Hershey Entertainment & Resorts](#) and [The M.S. Hershey Foundation](#). The goal of the group, founded in January 2011, is to further the legacy of Milton S. Hershey by partnering together to enrich the local community and raise its profile as a great place to live and work.

Crews have begun laying water and electrical lines at the site and constructing the raised beds for gardeners with limited mobility, and they will soon start construction of the other individual plot and bed areas. The Hershey Community Garden will include benches, a gazebo, and picnic tables for members to use. There will be water and hose access throughout the garden as well as compost bins and access to a shared storage shed with gardening tools.

Traditional garden plots as well as plots designed for children and highly raised plots for residents unable to bend to ground level will be available. A portion of the garden will be devoted to philanthropic purposes – the produce cultivated in this section will be donated to people in need in the community.

Community gardens are not new to Hershey. News sources indicate there is a history dating back to World War I, when the U. S. government promoted community gardens to supplement and expand the domestic food supply. In 1917 Mr. Hershey responded by setting aside six acres of ground in East Hershey for a community farm.

Public encouragement of vegetable gardens flourished anew when the United States entered World War II. The national Victory Garden campaign encouraged people to grow food for personal consumption and recreation, and to improve morale.

In spring of 1942, Hershey Estates set aside land that was divided up into garden plots. One dollar per garden plot was charged to cover the cost of harrowing and preparing the garden soil. Sources indicate that 1949 was the final year of this program when, since the war was over, the garden plots were renamed Freedom Gardens, as a way of rebranding the program.

Now Hershey Impact is bringing back the concept of a community garden to Hershey.

The Hershey Community Garden will be open for the 2014 spring planting season. A fall festival for the community to preview the garden, featuring free family activities and gardening demonstrations, is set for Saturday, October 5. Community members will be invited to reserve their garden plots at that time.

The Hershey Community Garden is a project of The Foundation for Enhancing Communities, fiscal sponsor.



Photo caption: From left to right: Dr. Harold L. Paz, Penn State Hershey; Leigh Horner, The Hershey Company; Janice Black, Foundation for Enhancing Communities; Garrett Gallia, Hershey Entertainment & Resorts; Don Papsen, the M.S. Hershey Foundation; Stephanie Alvarado, Milton Hershey School junior; Kassandre Happenny, Milton Hershey School senior; and Alan Brechbill, Penn State Hershey.