

Growing in Community: Edward's Story



"My name is Edward Smith and I am a painter. I paint portraits, I paint landscapes, I just paint - that's what I do. I've been doing it since I was five.

I've been living on the Eastside since 1976, so I've been an Eastsider for a very long time. I heard about the Allen Neighborhood Center back in 2010. At the time, I had heart disease, but none of the pills were doing the things they were supposed to be doing; I thought something really was not right. I believe eating healthy, unprocessed foods can really improve your quality of life, so I began seeing a dietician. When suddenly my insurance didn't cover this service anymore, I decided to start going to the Allen Farmers Market to shop because I could get organic produce and still stick to the diet plan that I had. Here at the farmers market, you can get all kinds of produce, you can get beef, poultry, eggs - you can get most everything from the farmers market.

Then, I joined on to the Hunter Park GardenHouse CSA program. I had read one of the fliers about the GardenHouse and I thought it would be a great opportunity because of how inexpensive it was, and I could even use my SNAP and Double up Food Bucks with it. Plus, it gave me a consolidated box of assorted produce so I didn't have to go shop - it made it easier for me! I now do most of my shopping through the Allen Farmers Market and the CSA. The quality of food here at ANC is superior to food you can get anywhere else.

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The CSA helps me try new foods and new recipes. Knowing how to use what you have can be really hard, but it's something you can learn. I take my produce and I split it with my sister, and then I also have some that I give to my kids, who are in college. I can feed about 6-7 people with one week's worth of produce – it goes a long way. My CSA always lasts me 2-3 weeks, and that's 2 weeks longer than anything I could get at a grocery store. The Hunter Park GardenHouse means a lot to the community. People get to see the whole process – from planting to harvest.

I take some of the workshops offered by ANC every now and then. I've taken the workshop on how to make beer, I've been to the one on canning, and I've gone to a few more about growing your own food. I've even had the opportunity to have my art on display and available for purchase in an exhibit in the Allen Market Place!

Allen Neighborhood Center focuses on improving this community's quality of life. It's a grassroots effort, and they've come such a long way over the years. A lot of their success has come from hard work, a lot of volunteerism, and a lot of sacrifice. Overall, the atmosphere here is perfect: I can find quality food and quality attitudes. You have to feel comfortable with the people you buy your food from, and I trust them here."