

## Future Eagle Scout Builds Garden

Evan wanted to work with the VA Medical Center in St. Cloud, the place where his late grandfather spent the last years of his life. When he approached officials at the facility in the spring, they directed him to Catholic Charities, who collaborates with the Medical Center and the St. Cloud HRA to provide the Al Loehr Veterans and Community Studio Apartments. The apartments are a low-income housing community designed for formerly homeless individuals or those at-risk of becoming homeless residents.

When Evan visited the apartments in April, he learned that residents had expressed an interest in a community garden and Catholic Charities hoped that they might be eating nutritious, fresh vegetables by the fall. Although Evan, who is 16, has until his eighteenth birthday to complete the qualifications to become an Eagle Scout, he rose to the challenge of the ambitious timeline, understanding how important the garden was for the residents.

“Some of the people here spend about 50 percent of their income on food, so they really don’t get around to vegetables,” Evan said.

The garden is now complete and is one that many home gardeners would envy. Evan borrowed a skid loader from Doom Construction and used it himself to create a bed for the garden. United Way Youth as Resources donated the funds for a load of black dirt to use as the base of the soil, as well as edging, and other supplies. Evan directed his crew of volunteers (mostly fellow boy scouts and family) to till the soil over a dozen times. The group further dug a trench and buried pipes so a water source would be available at the foot of the garden, without hindering lawn care. A bed of mulch down the center of the garden allows residents to easily access one of the ten 10 x 14 sections. Before he was finished, Evan and his crew marked the sections, edged the garden and added solar LED lights around the perimeter.

The only thing the group didn’t do was plant the garden. “The residents wanted to do that part,” Evan said.

“What a fine young man,” said Rick Podvin, Tenant Services Coordinator. “He really worked hard to get this project done. We met with him several times; he really thought through this project, and went above and beyond what we needed. He showed how much he respects our residents and we are deeply grateful.”

**Trina Dietz**  
**Sartell, MN**