

How Associate Lynda Bodie is transforming the world

By S. Rosemary Bonk



Associate Lynda Bodie with Catherine the goat.



MaeKare Keys and Kayla Hill introduce new chickens to the hen house.



Asia Duncan with the goats, Jordan and Catherine.

In talking with Associate **Lynda Bodie**, it is obvious how God is working in her life and the impact she is having on the world around her.

At Thea Bowman Leadership Academy, a charter school in Gary, Indiana, Lynda teaches urban students that it can be fun to be outside, to grow things and to manage a farm operation. It is not your typical curriculum, but it is an environment that Lynda thrives in.

It all started when Lynda noticed that students were throwing away the healthy part of their lunch, and no one wanted to spend time outdoors. This inspired Lynda and a small group of parents to launch a community garden at the school. Lettuce that was planted in a raised bed provided their first delicious salad.

“Once the students tasted the fresh, homegrown lettuce, they were convinced that getting their hands dirty and being outdoors was worth it,” Lynda said.

The school now has nine raised cedar beds, and Lynda encourages students of all ages to be involved.

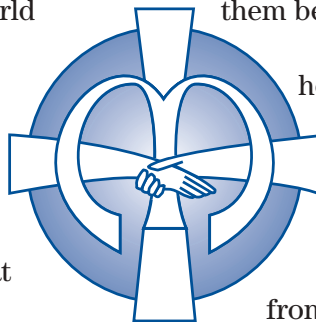
“We invite the kindergarteners to join us by pulling weeds,” she said with a laugh. “It is easier for them because they are closer to the ground.”

Lynda will be the first one to tell you that her involvement with a school garden or raising livestock is a gift from God. She had known nothing about gardening or livestock. They now also own two goats, which give milk used to make soap.

Her desire to learn new things comes from seeing the joy on children’s faces when they enjoy fresh vegetables or hold a chicken for the first time. When the students are passionate about learning, Lynda becomes passionate.

In less than a decade, the program has expanded from gardening to raising livestock and participating in 4H competitions. An upper-level high school business course has been developed to manage the chicken raising/egg laying business. The students are writing business plans, balancing the books, feeding the chickens and shoveling manure.

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Some of the graduates are now associated with Purdue University and have a chapter of the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences Program. A recent graduate has received a full, four-year scholarship to college because of her involvement with the program.

Lynda first met SSNDs who were working in her parish. She became an SSND associate in 2009 at the

invitation of Associate Joyce Illyes. Lynda's enthusiasm is contagious. One of the themes of her life is to recognize that if you are doing God's will you will find the time and energy to make it happen. And it is obvious that Lynda is doing God's will!

Read more about the farm:

<http://bit.ly/associates-urbanfarm1>

<http://bit.ly/associates-urbanfarm2>