

## Marigolds Herald Community Development

A community garden near the Rutgers campus is demonstrating how Mexican communities in the United States can reconnect with their cultural and agricultural roots, while at the same time improving residents' health and the economic vitality of their neighborhoods.

Lazos America Unida, a nonprofit community group, initially created a community garden to grow marigolds for Day of the Dead celebrations, an important cultural event for the Mexican community. The project became a rallying point for local Mexican and other Spanish-speaking immigrants to create a cohesive sense of community.

In partnership with Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, the program promotes economic development, urban gardening, job training, and education. These elements are creating intergenerational and intercommunity links, making the project a successful model for mutual respect, agricultural microenterprise, and community health.

Goals for expanding the program in the near future include job and business training opportunities for local residents; health, nutrition, and cooking classes; and increasing exposure to Rutgers to enhance access to higher education for the children of Mexican immigrants.

The Marigold Project has been built through countless hours of volunteer work by Lazos America Unida. With increased matching support from the university and grassroots organizations in the community, it will continue to grow and prosper.

You can help to empower recent immigrants to obtain educational, economic, cultural, and social equity by funding the Marigold Project. Please contact The Office of Development at 732-932-9000, ext. 576 or [development@sebs.rutgers.edu](mailto:development@sebs.rutgers.edu) for more information.

*For more information, visit us at [www.sebs.rutgers.edu/development](http://www.sebs.rutgers.edu/development).*

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