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Backgrounder for Project Hope

The poverty rate in the Emerson-Garfield and West Central areas is 27%, which is much higher than for other areas in Spokane. These neighborhoods are known as “food deserts” because of the high level poverty and low level of access to healthy food. Project Hope, an urban farming enterprise, was founded in 2004 in response to two incidents of gang violence.

Project Hope provides neighborhood youth ages 11-18 with opportunities to earn money and develop valuable job skills such as project management, punctuality, effective customer, influential marketing, and a solid work ethic. This “green collar job program” has two steps. The first entails planting and growing fresh produce on Riverfront Farm, which consists of 7-acres of city lots covered in garden beds. At the second stage, vegetables are sold at the West Central Farmer’s Market. The selling of produce not only helps kids, but also benefits the Emerson-Garfield and West Central neighborhoods by offering fresh, nutrient-rich food to the inhabitants.

There is also another branch to Project Hope besides the West Central Farmer’s Market and Riverfront Farm. It is called the West Central Lawn Care operation and is carried out during the summer months. The purpose of this branch is to improve the appearance of neighborhoods and encourage a sense of pride in the community.

Currently, Project Hope seeks to broaden awareness of its mission beyond the Emerson-Garfield and West Central neighborhoods and into the public consciousness of Spokane as a whole. Unfortunately, Project Hope has had to turn away many kids from the program because it simply does not have enough funds to support them.

Consequently, Project Hope plans on developing a publicity strategy to appeal to businesses and the wider community to help support the positive impact they are having on the lives of young and old alike in the most impoverished areas of Spokane.