

Getting Back to Your Roots

At the start of every year people try to lead healthier lifestyles whether it's going to the gym five days a week, drinking more kale smoothies or eating better to have a restored mind and body. Right before spring hits, gyms become ghost towns while the fast food lines start creeping back up to maximum capacity.

Urban Roots is located in Reno and is dedicated to helping the community grow healthier, one green thumb at a time. Urban Roots is a non-profit organization that was founded on the belief of growing healthy minds, bodies and communities through education and service.

Fayth Ross is the executive director of Urban Roots. Her role is to put multiple programs together for home schooled children and their families who would like to know more about eating healthy, teachers in the area who want to implement gardening within their classrooms and individuals wanting to be future farmers.

Since September 2016 after decades of an increasing the national childhood obesity rate it has leveled off and the rise in obesity among adults is beginning to slow, according to the [State of Obesity](#) website.

"When children have been with us consistently their becoming food explorers," Ross said. "They are willing to try new things...we have heard from parents, my kid has never eaten a bell pepper! Everyday we try new things."

Ross is a mother to three children so she knows first hand how hard it is to get kids to eat foods of all different colors. Ross got involved in Urban Roots through her children who used to participate in one of the summer camps the program has to offer. After seeing how successful the program was she decided to partner with them. Her past work experience with The Desert Research Institute showed her that many teachers wanted to learn more about including hands on gardening in their classrooms. One of the ways they learned about it was by attending one of Urban Roots teacher trainings.

What makes this program so successful is the fact that people are taught by simply getting their hands dirty. Ross said their approach is very hands on, they teach through doing projects and by their own experience which allows children to learn.

During the summer kids will be at the farm from 9 am to 4 pm everyday practicing their farming skills. The morning begins with chores that consist of weeding,

watering plants and even feeding chickens. Kids also get the opportunity to participate in activities with literature gaining the knowledge they need on the farm. Urban Roots doesn't just get families to shop healthy more often, but they try to enable everyone involved in the community to participate in the programming they offer.

The hands-on-lessons that Urban Roots instills in their students are modified to fit all different grades from Kindergarten through seniors in high school, and beyond. The program offers free tools on their website for students and educators to get their daily fix of health. Sharing their information online is a way for Urban Roots to engross a wide range of diversity for students within any situation to create greater involvement.

From farm school, farm camp, school gardens, lesson plans, and even scholarship opportunities, Urban Roots has something for everyone. Their next goal is to open a teaching farm in partnership with Renown Health. Summer 2017 will be the first opportunity for students from eleven to fifteen years old to join the program. They work with Volunteers of America Family Shelter (VOA) to ensure families staying at the VOA have the same opportunities to healthy food and education.

Urban Roots is currently looking for more space and additional volunteers. Ross' message is simple, "you only have one body, you really do and we have such an awful epidemic in our country being obese and being over weight and there's something we can do about it," Ross said. "And that's eating right."

Urban Roots is located at 3001 W 4th St, Reno, NV 89523. Drop in days are every Tuesday - Saturday from 10 am to noon or call in advance to make an appointment at (775) 636-5105.