

**Karen 'Chava' Knox', president *Eden Gardens Block Club*, Detroit:**



Having young people here from Germany was an amazing opportunity for cultural exchange for the young and old Detroiters associated with *Eden Gardens*. There were no pretenses of what should or should not be. The participants of *Growing Together Detroit* were open to learning about Detroit, *Eden Gardens*, and the little community the surrounds it. They came with an open mind, not judging, fearing or thinking the worst before they entered the inner city. They worked along side young students from Detroit. They didn't think they were thugs. They saw them as normal young people, just like the youngsters from their country. The students from Detroit enjoyed the exchange. They were excited to learn about another culture and work side by side with the students from Germany without hesitation.

I look at the picture of the young German student and the young African American student sawing the tree together as being symbolic of how two cultures can come together to change this small part of Detroit a little bit at a time. They were sawing through racism, hatred, culture barriers, and the stereotypes associated with them, to build a new tomorrow. It is easy to go into the upper and middle class neighborhoods of the suburbs and enjoy the comforts of life; but to come into the city of Detroit and learn what it means to be for young and old to be living in the city is what this program is all about.

The participants of *Growing Together Detroit* learned that the young people of Detroit are kind, open and willing to learn. They talked, laughed and even made beats together to a song a young child had written. They saw the struggles of rebuilding a neighborhood and they worked along side the youth of Detroit to clean up the area. All the work was done with smiles and laughter.



The elders of the community loved and enjoyed the Germans as well. So much did they enjoy them that the elders are talking about how they would love to take a trip to Germany.

Yes, this cultural exchange opened the eyes to both sides, the inner city children, the adults and the Germans and made a lasting impression that will take them through a lifetime. We look forward to their returns and to continue to build this bridge of food justice, love, rebuilding Detroit, and a community across the waters. It all started in a little garden called *Eden Gardens*. *Eden Gardens* has become the healing garden of the body, relationships, and community connecting continents—for today and the future.