Plenty of room to grow

HOPE Garden begins its third growing season

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Soon to awaken — The air is cool and damp; there is a kind of mist to it. The afternoon is fading to evening, and it is especially fresh, as southern Indiana is enjoying a rainy March and early April.

At HOPE Garden, most beds soggily await their plantings. Gauzy tents protect delicate fledglings, until "winter breaks."

"You see how green this stuff is?"

Mike Jones points to a bundle of iceberg lettuce. The color of the fresh, curling iceberg is so vibrant that it easily rivals that of a head of Boston.

"That's *actually* iceberg," Jones reiterates, "and have you ever seen iceberg lettuce that color green? Usually it's kind of yellow, it's a light green or it's white."

There's a reason that Jones is passionate about lettuce color. As Executive Director of Memorial Hospital Foundation, Jones oversees HOPE (Helping Others Produce Enthusiasm) Garden, a volunteer effort coordinated by the foundation to counter food insecurity in Dubois and surrounding counties. The darker the lettuce, the higher it is in nutritional value, and providing high quality, nutritious produce is the primary goal of the garden project.

So what is food insecurity?

The USDA measures the *lack of access* to nutritionally adequate food for an active, healthy lifestyle. Households suffering from limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods are referred to as *food insecure*. Food insecurity may reflect the household's need to make trade-offs between important basic needs (shelter, medical bills) and

Almost ready — Containers of plants, like this bell pepper, will soon be transferred to the outdoor garden. Until then, they share the light and heat from the towers' growing lamps.

"They're on the winter timer," tells Jones, "about 11 hours on, then they're off." He explains that "like people," plants require rest; so lamps do not need to run 24 hours.