

The Farm-to-Table Program Summer/Fall 2009 Report

Growing Pride in Rappahannock County Public Schools

by Trista Scheuerlein, Program Director

The mission of the RCPS Farm-to-Table Program (F2T) is to cultivate students who are good stewards of the earth and productive community members through classroom study of horticulture, cultivation of school gardens, and hands-on experiences at local family farms.

Elementary School Program: With the “many hands make light work” concept, the Young Garden is complete and beautiful! The raingarden is installed, complete with native plants from Janet Davis of Hill House Nursery. The rain barrels are collecting 165 gallons of water collectively per rain storm, and students were able to calculate the total potential water we could save by taking the area of the roof using a formula for rainwater collection. The pollinator garden beds are weeded and the pathways are freshly mulched. Students harvested 22 pounds of beets which they ate raw and boiled with a little salt and olive oil and donated to the Senior Center. They have learned how to save seeds and saved cleome, celosia, and radish seeds. We have planted collards, kale, radicchio, chives, rosemary, and lettuce in our beds and our Earthboxes.



Above: Jacob Higgins, Matthew Fewell, Jake Jenkins, and Tiger Taylor harvest beets.

Left: Students David Smoot and Jacob Higgins give tours to Dr. and Mr. Greer and guests from Albemarle County who are interested in creating a similar program in Charlottesville area schools.



Farm Tour a Success! F2T was featured on the first Rappahannock Farm Tour in September. At Friday night's screening of the film *Fresh*, F2T had brochures, information, and a raffle for a home energy audit by Andrew Grigsby of Commonwealth Sustainability in Culpeper. Saturday and Sunday from 11-5, student-led demonstrations were held at both schools. Students showed visitors how to plant in Earthboxes, discussed our rain garden, and planted seedlings in our hoophouse. Despite the rain, over 100 people attended the school tours!

High school: Students have done their fair share of weeding since school began in August! The hoophouse weeding from the summer break was a large job and students rose to the challenge. Over 25 pounds of lettuce has been harvested for the school cafeterias and for the Culinary Arts to use for teacher dinners during conference night. Students have also harvested carrots, cucumbers and apples which went to the Senior Center, Plant a Row for the Hungry, and the school cafeteria with the exception of a few apples which were made into an apple crisp in appreciation for their hard work! Field trips this semester have included Blandy Arboretum, Bruce Jones' property, The Farm at Sunnyside, Waterpenny Farm, Lee's Orchard, Williams' Orchard, Gadino Cellars, and the Episcopal Church for a dried flower arrangement lesson. The hoophouse is now planted with winter crops.



F2T thanks our volunteers! This summer, volunteers of all walks of life came out to help with the F2T event at Chateauville, with regular garden maintenance, pulling out poison ivy from the elementary school gardens, installing drain tile to keep our mulch in place at RCHS, hauling in wheelbarrows filled with rain garden soil, spreading mulch, and preparing for the Farm Tour. A special thanks to Louise Bondelid for the cold frame at RCHS and to Carolyn Thornton for her dedication.



Farm-to-Cafeteria: Four volunteers pitched in to hand out fresh, local apples from Williams' Orchard for the first Seasonal and Local Foods Tasting of the year. Culinary arts students washed the six bushels of York and Golden Delicious apples, and information cards went home with students to tell them many of the area businesses where they can find local apples this time of year. Stacey Carlberg of Piedmont Environmental Council was one of the volunteers and also promoted PEC's Eat Local Challenge to eat 21 local foods in 21 days. Six of the 6/7 F2T Exploratory students met the challenge, and a number of Culinary Arts students did as well. On larger fronts, Program Director Trista Scheuerlein is helping lead the way for integrating more local foods into school cafeterias statewide on the Virginia Farm-to-School Steering Committee. Virginia's first Department of Education-sanctioned Local Food week is set for November 9-13.



Above left: 7th grader Allen Miley shows off the painting job he did on the sign designed by GT art students and created by Building Trades students at RCHS. **Above:** Eat Local Apples! **Left:** Volunteer and Garden Club member Aleta Gadino thins carrots on a warm summer morning. **Below:** Volunteers Beth Gall, Toni Egger, and Cheri Woodard spread the good news about F2T at our Chateauville dinner event.



Outreach: F2T has been busy trying to raise funds for our program's continuance in future years and to help other nearby school systems start similar programs. In July, F2T served a catered dinner created by Chef Mary Arthur at the Chateauville Foundation's opening opera weekend. Trista spoke at PEC's annual meeting and the Farm Bureau's annual meeting. Throughout the summer and fall, the program director has worked with a committee in Warren County who is trying to start a program in Front Royal's public schools. Other parents and teachers in Albemarle, Madison, Orange, and Fauquier Counties are interested in starting similar programs. We hope that students everywhere will begin "Growing Pride!"