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Purpose of newsletter: To keep parents, students, school personnel, community members, and other interested parties informed of the Wylde Center's Decatur Farm to School programming in the community.

Happenings in the Kitchen: From Ultimate Menu Committee to the Present

Many have noticed some of the great changes occurring in the City Schools of Decatur (CSD) kitchens through the introduction of new vegetables, whole grains, and alternative protein sources. What many may NOT know is that a lot is also happening behind the scenes to improve the systems and processes that bring this great food to the table.

In spring 2012, CSD's Nutrition Director Allison Goodman was tasked with pulling a committee together to review the cafeteria menu and make a Top 10 List of foods that the group would prefer to be removed or changed to a healthier version. Comprised of volunteer parents, Decatur Farm to School (DF2S) committee members, and CSD staff, the Ultimate Menu Committee (UMC) was established and charged with developing an ideal menu that is both healthy and delicious.

The results of the UMC meetings were presented to Dr. Edwards and the CSD School Board in the fall of 2012. Included in the report was the recommendation to hire an outside consultant to evaluate current processes and find ways in which parts of the system could be streamlined or improved. While it was agreed that an assessment would be ideal, the budget at that time could not allow for CSD to fund it completely.

This is when DF2S and CSD joined forces, along with the amazing support of the community, to collaborate towards a solution. Thanks to a \$2,000 donation to the Wylde Center from a generous benefactor, and funds raised through many DF2S Dine Outs, DF2S was able to pay the \$8,000 needed to match CSD funds and hire a consultant for the evaluation.

After reviewing several bids, School Meal Solutions (SMS) was ultimately chosen for their obvious passion and drive to share their lessons learned over the years. Rick Hughes from SMS visited CSD and spent three action-packed days visiting and shadowing the Nutrition Department and staff, Dr. Edwards, the UMC, as well as all the schools and principals.

In early March 2014, Rick Hughes presented his report at the School Board meeting and later met with the UMC to review the report. The report was full of ideas and suggestions. It was reassuring to learn that we are on the right track and that in many ways, CSD is already doing a good job. They offered suggestions for improvements and cutting costs. Some of the suggestions we are considering include:

- Joining a group purchasing organization to increase buying power and reduce costs.

- Eliminating portioned packs for salad dressing, which will reduce costs and provide a fresher, healthier product by making our own dressings.
- Continuing to eliminate highly processed ingredients and increase scratch cooking.

Next on the agenda is reconvening the UMC to develop timelines and strategies for implementation of many of the proposed systematic changes. That, of course, will likely require additional funds to help support CSD. So you can be sure that DF2S will continue to find ways to raise funds to help support CSD in their efforts to create the best possible nutrition department.

We could not have accomplished this much without the help of our students, parents, teachers, administrators, community organizations and members. Thanks SO much for your support throughout these years. It is through the generosity of your time and funds that allow us to support CSD and our children in so many vital ways! We look forward to updating you on all the exciting changes that will continue to occur behind the scenes that drive us forward in our mission to create, as Allison first put it, "the ultimate menu for our children."

Thank You Partners



Thank you to the City Schools of Decatur for supporting Farm to School initiatives in their schools.



T-shirt design and printing donated in part by Carrot & Stick.



Printing funded in part by Decatur Atlanta Printing.

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Spring 2014 NEWSLETTER

Rocket (Arugula) Walnut Pesto

(adapted from Gail Hobbs-Page at Food and Wine)

Ingredients:

1/2 cup walnuts
2 bunches arugula (1/2 pound), large stems discarded
4 garlic cloves, smashed
1/4 pound Parmesan or Manchego cheese, coarsely shredded OR 3 Tbsp. nutritional yeast for a vegan option

Zest and juice of 1 lemon

3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. Put the walnuts in a pie plate or sheet pan and toast for about 8 minutes, or until golden and fragrant. Let cool completely.

2. In a food processor, pulse the arugula leaves with the toasted walnuts and smashed garlic cloves until finely chopped. Add the shredded cheese (or nutritional yeast if going vegan), lemon zest and juice and pulse until combined. With the machine on, add the olive oil in a steady stream and process to a smooth paste. Season the pesto with salt and pepper, transfer to a bowl and serve.

3. Serve over pasta or roasted vegetables, as a spread on sandwiches, as a sauce for pizza, on roast chicken or sliced steak, or even mix in scrambled eggs. Pesto goes with everything! Makes 2 cups.

Cafeteria News

City Schools of Decatur is proud to announce that we have acquired two Vitamix 5201 XL industrial-sized blenders (1.5 gallon capacity) through a grant for Renfroe Middle School and Decatur High School. We will be testing smoothies at the end of the school year for those two schools. We are excited about adding smoothies as a menu item at the middle and high schools during the 2014-15 school year.

Rocket: Spring Taste Test

Who wouldn't want to grow a Rocket in their garden? This spring, City Schools of Decatur (CSD) students planted their school gardens with rocket (known as "arugula" here in the states). By the end of March, with the assistance of Wylde Center's Melanie Heckman and Nichole Lupo, pre-K through 5th grade students planted the quick-growing salad vegetable. Once the leaves of the plant grow to four to six inches, students will harvest the leaves for a delicious taste test of this fresh and flavorful veggie. Taste tests will be conducted at each school in May, and we will report the taste test results in our fall newsletter and on our website, www.decaturfarmtoschool.org.

Why is this vegetable called ROCKET?

Perhaps Arugula is also called "Rocket" because of its rocket-fast growth (it can grow from sprout to harvest in just six weeks), or perhaps it comes from its French name "Roquette". Whatever you decide to call it, Salad Rocket or Arugula is a crunchy leafy green veggie that is used raw in salads or sprinkled atop pasta dishes. It has a peppery taste, and is a good source of vitamin A, folate and potassium. We hope you'll try the recipe included on this page: Arugula Walnut Pesto!

You can grow Rocket at home!

Arugula is a quick-growing, cool season annual that can be grown here in Georgia during the spring and fall, when the temperatures are cooler. Due to its shallow roots, arugula makes a great container vegetable! You can start harvesting its leaves once they grow to approximately 3 inches long. You can harvest the outer leaves and allow the rosette to continue growing until you're ready to harvest the whole head. Arugula is an easy crop whose biggest chore is keeping it well-watered, which will prevent the plants from bolting (flowering) too soon. Once it sends up flower stalks, the leaves will become bitter. But don't compost the flowers – they are edible too!

Renfroe Students in the Garden

Turn the page to read the full story on how Renfroe Middle School students are using their school garden.



Renfroe 6th graders weed the school garden during an International Perspectives class.



Renfroe 8th graders wear grocery bags over their shoes to keep them clean. The garden will soon have pavers to reduce tracking mud back into the classroom.

Volunteer Spotlight: Tabitha Wiedower



Tabitha first got involved with DF2S through the DF2S teacher training program. She was interested in serving on the DF2S board because she believes that although Decatur is well known for its community focus and support of local food growers, not all Decatur kids are garden natives who know the origins of their food, or have even tried a variety of fresh foods. As a teacher, Tabitha aims to expose all of her students to the literal and figurative roots of fruit and vegetables.

Many of us know Tabitha Wiedower as one of the third grade teachers at Glennwood Elementary. She is also committee secretary for Decatur Farm to School (DF2S), a position she has held since 2011. Besides serving as the secretary, Tabitha is the go-to person and subject matter expert on all things City Schools of Decatur (CSD) for the DF2S board, providing a teacher's and school's perspective. Tabitha also serves as the Glennwood school garden and DF2S liaison, where she consistently goes above and beyond by helping in the garden, finding volunteers, and integrating DF2S into school events, such as the Glennwood Fall Festival and the DF2S Dine Outs.

Congratulations to Our Newly Selected 2014 Decatur High School Interns!

Best wishes to Isha Hussef, Zoey Laird, and Declan Tillman who applied for and were accepted into this year's Decatur Farm to School summer internship program. Each Decatur High student will work 60 hours training in Farm to School concepts, as well as work at two locations to gain exposure to both the agricultural and consumer sides of Farm to Table. We will hear about their experiences in the Fall 2014 DF2S newsletter.

Two Wylde Center Members Elected as Decatur's 2013 Hometown Heroes

Congratulations to our two Decatur Hometown Heroes: Kristin Allin for her work on the Wylde Center Board and community support; Lucia Pawloski for her leadership with Decatur Farm to School, a Wylde Center program.



Photo courtesy of Roger Easley Imagery

Dine Out Success



Decatur Farm to School hosted two recent Dine Outs to help raise money and awareness for its farm to school programs. On January 25, our restaurant partner Seven Hens hosted a special Dine Out, and on March 25, we held our biannual Spring Dine Out at twelve local restaurants. **We raised almost \$5,000!** Hearty thanks to all of our restaurant partners, including Brick Store Pub, Cakes & Ale, The Iberian Pig, Farm Burger, Lawrence's Cafe, Leon's Full Service, Matador Cantina, Raging Burrito, Saporì di Napoli, Steinbeck's, Universal Joint, and Wahoo! Grill and for all those businesses who donated goods and services for our popular raffle. We could not have had a successful evening without our tireless volunteers: Cinnamon Davis, Devonne Krueger, Erin Murphy, Lucia Pawloski, Marni Pittman, and Sarah VanDenBerg and superstar leader, Kerri Shannon. Thank you one and all!



Top photo: CSD students gather together at Farm Burger to support DF2S. Bottom photo: Cara and Ben Jensen enjoy their fries at Leon's Full Service during the Spring Dine Out.

Decatur Farm to School Donates Book to Elementary Libraries to Coincide with Taste Tests



Just in time for this spring's taste test, Decatur Farm to School is donating another book to the CSD elementary libraries. *Lettuce Grows on the Ground* provides pre-K to 2nd grade readers with the basics about how lettuce is grown. With full-color photos, the book shows how lettuce grows from seed to harvest. This book will be a welcome complement to the lessons and experiences the children will have. Pre-K through 5th graders have all assisted in the arugula planting at their respective schools, and we hope that every elementary student will try (and enjoy) tasting the arugula they helped grow!

A special thanks to Little Shop of Stories who helped procure the donated books at a discounted price.

City Schools of Decatur Students Experience Farm to School in Different Ways

Oakhurst Elementary

As part of their Links curriculum, two Oakhurst third graders reviewed two Farm to School books. Here are their reviews:

The Curious Garden by Peter Brown



Hello my name is Samantha, and I am going to tell you about a book where a little boy turns a damp, dusty place into something beautiful. It is called *The Curious Garden*, by Peter Brown. This story is about a boy who lives in a place where there are no trees or greenery of any kind. He is surprised to find a small patch of dying plants, but it is clear it needs a gardener.

Just as he tries to help the garden grow, we try to make our school, Oakhurst, as green as we can. My favorite part of the book was when everyone in the city started to help the garden grow. I would recommend this book to anyone who likes sweet, peaceful books. Check it out at your school library or buy it at the bookstore.

The Carrot Seed by Ruth Krauss



Hi! I'm Eliza Gainty, and I'm here to talk to you about the book, *The Carrot Seed*, by Ruth Krauss, illustrated by Crockett Johnson. In this book, a small boy plants a carrot seed, and everybody tells him it won't come up. It's a pretty short book, about 12 pages. It's a great little book, however; perfect for young gardeners and readers. Just as the little boy planted the carrot seed, we plant things every 2-3 months, for Farm to School. My favorite part of the book is at the end, and I don't want to give it away. If you like the book *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, you will like this book as well because both have illustrations by Crockett Johnson. Stroll on down to your local library or bookstore and plant an order for this book, *The Carrot Seed*.

Decatur High School

Our DF2S high school representative Meredith Broyles spoke with fellow senior Anelia Moore about her senior project. Every year, Decatur High School seniors are charged with a mandatory service project. The senior project is centered on community service, and challenges each student to find a topic about which they are passionate, define a need for service, and satisfy that need with the project they design. For Anelia Moore, the project meant doing something she loved – gardening. She built a garden at F.Ave, and here's what she had to say about her experience:

M: Why did you decide to plant a garden at F.Ave?

A: It all started with needing a senior project. I worked in the garden at my camp over the summer and thought it would be really fun. I chose F.Ave because they were the only Decatur school that did not yet have a garden.

M: What types of crops did you plant?

A: We planted rocket (Arugula), sugar snap peas, and lettuce.

M: How did you get the students and staff involved?

A: I had help from Therese May on the PTO board who spoke to the principal for classes to help. The first two days were used for shoveling soil into the galvanized tubs. The teacher incorporated it into a math lesson plan that had to deal with how many buckets they'd have to shovel in order to fill up a whole tub.

M: What issues did you face?

A: Though there was a delay during the fall semester due to the new school construction, we went ahead and planned it out. As soon as

we received the principal's approval for the garden, we started immediately.

M: What are you most proud of about this project?

A: The fact that it worked out and we finished.



F.Ave students helped establish the school's raised beds during the winter months of 2014.

Renfroe Middle School

International Perspectives Course Uses the Newly Rebuilt Renfroe Garden in Fruitful Ways

One of the electives classes available at Renfroe is International Perspectives (IP), taught by Krysta Johnson. This unique elective mixes the disciplines of Family and Consumer Science, humanities and science using the garden as an integral part of the classroom. According to Mrs. Johnson, in each grade the students seek to answer the question, "what do different cultures eat and how do they raise their children?" In turn, during the one-term course students might also ask, "What do they grow? How do they prepare their food? What herb combinations do they use?" Mrs. Johnson says, "By the end of the term, the students should be able to recognize the herbs we plant by sight, smell and taste." Mrs. Johnson stresses the importance of the students experiencing the process of growing the food they will eventually eat. "The kids love planting and harvesting, and as a result will tolerate the less interesting steps in between, like weeding."

Mrs. Johnson has found that incorporating the garden into her curriculum makes it easy to connect with the curricula of humanities and science. The crops that each class chooses relate back to what is grown in the geographic areas each grade level is studying in humanities.

What's more, the different grade levels also relate to the science curriculum through issues like seed propagation, heredity, and how plant growth compares to child development. The current sixth graders have germinated sunflower, bean and tomato seeds that will soon be planted in the garden. Seventh graders have planted rosemary, basil, thyme, tarragon, cilantro, parsley, and oregano, while eighth graders are planning a Three Sisters Garden in conjunction with their study of the evolution of food in the American South.

Many IP students enjoy working in the garden. Sixth grader Ryan Murphy says, "I like coming outside and pulling stuff out of the ground." Eighth grader Angel Lara agrees, "What I like most is picking plants I've helped grow."

Renfroe's garden currently consists of eight raised beds, all of which have recently been rebuilt with the help of the Wylde Center. The previous beds had deteriorated and crabgrass encroachment made weeding difficult. The newly refurbished beds will have pathways in between that will make it easier to maintain the beds during the summer. The students have completed weeding the beds and are currently laying cardboard and mulch for the walkways, and filling the beds with top soil and compost.

Ms. Johnson has big plans for the garden, but will need volunteers and supplies to help those come to fruition. The school continues to need help and seeks volunteers who can help maintain the garden during weekends, breaks, and the summer months. "Down the road it would be so helpful to have some rainwater systems, a tool shed, and greenhouse," Mrs. Johnson says. Those items would provide much-needed storage for tools and would allow the students to spend more of their time doing the fun stuff -- like digging in the dirt.