

Healthy Foods
FOR **Healthy Kids** 

The First State school garden experts

The latest news and updates from Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids



(L) to (R): 2022 Champion Cultivators Melissa Tracy gives remarks; Maggie Kite accepts the award from HFHK ED Lydia Sarson; and Christy Kerr speaks on the program's impact at her school. Photo credit: HFHK Staff.

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**HFHK ANNUAL FUNDRAISER "GROWING THE
FUTURE" SOLD OUT, EDUCATORS HONORED**

September 16, 2022 was a big day for Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids as we welcomed 120 guests to our annual friend- & fund-raising event. This year's celebration was titled "Growing the Future: The Promise of the School Garden Movement" and took place at Auburn Valley State Park. The theme was inspired by the first-ever national school garden conference, "Growing the School Garden Movement", organized by Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation and the School Garden Support Organization (SGSO). Two HFHK staff members attended the conference in April in Denver, CO.

"Meeting with other school garden organizations and professionals from across the country was absolutely pivotal to our vision of HFHK," states Lydia Sarson, Executive Director. "What we learned there was two-fold; one, we have something truly special here in Delaware with the HFHK 'Education Cultivation' program. No other organization or person we met with had the reach and impact that we do. The other major lesson learned was that this school garden movement isn't going away. It is only growing and we, as The First State school garden experts, have a responsibility to stand up and lead."

The event not only promoted the value of school gardens, but highlighted the work of three educators from across the state.

(cont. on pg. 5)

HFHK adds four new schools to the Fall 2022 season

Welcome IRSD Early Learning Center, Milton, Lord Baltimore & Lewis

This year's Fall 2022 growing season did not slow down despite our September 16th fundraiser. Milton, Lord Baltimore, and Lewis Elementary Schools partnered with Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids this fall season, as did Indian River School District's (IRSD) Early Learning Center (ELC). This is HFHK's first foray into early learning.



Lord Baltimore student is excited to plant!
Photo credit: HFHK

In February 2022, HFHK staff was invited to present to the elementary principals meeting in Indian River school district. This presentation,



Cultivating a love of learning at Milton.
Photo credit: HFHK

along with the advocacy by Phillip Showell Elementary principal, Christy Kerr, helped forge relationships with principals at Lord Baltimore, John M. Clayton (Spring '22), East Millsboro (Spring '23), and the Early Learning Center.

Using lessons learned at the "Growing School Gardens" Conference she attended in April, Program Manager Jen Cipolla worked with HFHK's Program Advisory Committee and staff at ELC to create this pilot. *(cont. on pg. 4)*

Adesis, Inc. rebuilds Pleasantville Elementary Adopt-a-Garden program provides volunteers, support

In January 2022, Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids quietly piloted an Adopt-a-Garden sponsorship program with Nemours Children's Health and Adesis, Inc. While Nemours adopted Carrie Downie Elementary School (2013), Adesis adopted Pleasantville Elementary (2015).

Pleasantville, who has been a partner school since 2015, had been having severe weed issues with their old garden beds. In the spring, company volunteers helped weed the garden and supported a harvest day. In July this year, volunteers came back to build new beds after Colonial School District removed the old ones.

"Having this level of community involvement is exactly what we want to see happen with the Adopt-a-Garden program. Many of our gardens are getting to the point where rebuilds will be necessary for

WORDS CANNOT DO JUSTICE TO HOW AMAZING IT IS TO WATCH THE ENGAGEMENT AND JOY ON THE KIDS' FACES AS THEY LEARN ABOUT HEALTHY FOODS AND SCIENCE!

— GEORGETTE LANG, ADESIS, INC.



Georgette Lang, Adesis, Inc., is all smiles pushing a wheelbarrow full of weeds.



Volunteers smile for a selfie with the finished garden. Photo credit: HFHK

program effectiveness and efficacy," remarked HFHK Executive Director Lydia Sarson.

"Adopting a garden has given us the opportunity to strengthen our roots in the community where we are located, and also helps us to foster relationships within our company. We are rapidly expanding and activities like this give employees from our different sites the chance to both work and have fun together," said Georgette Lang, Senior Chemist at Adesis.

Thank you to Adesis for this support and thank you to Highmark for funding the rebuild.

Summer with Serviam's Scholars and families



Serviam Scholars plant herbs in their summer garden.
Photo credit: HFHK

to pilot a summer garden and speaker series. The final day of school both students and their families were invited to join HFHK in the garden where they planted summer crops such as tomatoes, beans, squash, hot and sweet peppers, cucumbers and various herbs. Drip irrigation kept the plants growing until the scholars returned for their 4-week summer program. Each week the students were treated with a guest speaker and a snack from the garden.

For the first week, Dr. Toyo Ajayi, FMC Corporation, joined the scholars and spoke on the various pests and diseases that the plants face, from sucking and piercing insects to mildew and blight. The students were able to catch insects in the garden and determine whether they were friend or foe. They also harvested squash, which HFHK Executive Director Lydia Sarson turned into Squash & Honey Muffins for the scholars to enjoy the following week during their pollinator discussion.

During week two, pollinator expert and HFHK Board Member Dr. Thalia Pappas brought various honeys, honey sticks, and honey comb for the students to observe and taste. Later they went out to the garden to observe different pollinators and their roles within our food system. The scholars enjoyed learning how the 'Queen Bee' took command of her hive, but all agreed she produces way too many children (1,000-1,500 eggs per day!).

Dr. Melvina Brown, founder and owner of InnerSource Wellness Center, brought her urban regenerative farm to the school. Grape vine, honeysuckle, lavender, chives, tree collards, echinacea, wineberry, and sage were just a few of the samples Dr. Brown

Laffey-McHugh funds summer program

Surprisingly to many people, the summer is supposed to be a down time for HFHK staff to clean up any outstanding items from the spring growing season and prepare for the fall. That was not the case this summer! Instead, it was full of learning, partnerships, and exploration thanks to the Laffey-McHugh Foundation and Serviam Girls Academy (2017).

In May 2022, HFHK was awarded a grant through Laffey-McHugh



Dr. Toyo Ajayi, FMC, speaks to the students about plant pests and diseases. Photo credit: HFHK



A scholar harvests a 7.5 turnip! Photo credit: HFHK

(con't pg 4)

HFHK receives major funding from DDA, Highmark

In July, Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids was one of first applicants approved for The First State Food System Program, a new grant program organized by the Council on Farm and Food Policy. This program, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), is intended to highlight the interconnection of systems and processes that influence nutrition, food security, health, community development, and agricultural prosperity. The \$60,000 awarded to HFHK will fund the build of two new gardens and program implementation at two new schools within Sussex County over the course of two years.

Highmark BCBS awarded HFHK a two-year \$30,000 grant in August through their BluePrints for the Community program. This funding will support the garden rebuilds at Brookside, North Star, Joseph E. Johnson, Shortlidge and West Park Place Elementary Schools.

Many thanks to the Council on Farm and Food Policy and Highmark BCBS for supporting the expansion and continuation of our "Education Cultivation" program.



Council member David Marvel speaks to about the new First State Food System Program. Photo credit: HFHK

Summer, con't.

(cont. from pg. 2)

brought to show the students. They learned about annuals vs. perennials and the about the healing properties many herbs and shrubs have. Students harvested basil from the garden and made their own Caprese bites, while sampling elderberry tea.

For the fourth and final week, dietitians from Nemours Children's Health, Ashley Haller and Kim Cramer, discussed with the scholars the importance of "eating the rainbow" but "not the Skittles kind!" and made quick refrigerator pickles. During week three, the students also harvested cucumbers, which Sarson took home for a quick pickling. Students enjoyed many helpings of regular dill pickles, as well as spicy zucchini spears and Middle Eastern pickled turnips!

After the morning lessons, families were invited back for the final harvest where **213 lbs**

of produce was harvested and distributed to the scholars, their families and Serviam staff. In addition, another 7 bushels of produce was supplemented from Penn Farm and Sprouts to ensure fair take-home distribution for all participants.

Thank you to Serviam, Laffey-McHugh, our speakers and the scholars for a successful summer!

HFHK Out-and-About!

See us around town? Say hi!



(L): DDA Deputy Sec. Nikko Brady opens the 4th Annual Council on Farm & Food Policy seminar.



Above: Full house for the Inspiring Women in STEM conference.



Above: HFHK Leadership is participating in Board Chair/CEO training with DANA.

Welcome new schools, cont.

(cont. from pg. 2)



Preschoolers listen to Jen's lesson at IRSD ELC.

In August HFHK staff visited the ELC and built four new beds in addition to the ones already on the grounds. In October HFHK and volunteers built the garden at Lord Baltimore Elementary and three days later, Program Coordinator Rachel Terracina was working with the teachers and students for their first garden lessons. We have to give a big thank you to Mr. Terry and his grounds crew who built the shed before we arrived. What a wonderful surprise!

Over the summer we were introduced to Milton Elementary and in early September, HFHK, school staff, parent volunteers and students gathered to build their garden. Students and parents alike dove head first into the project, working together to assemble their new garden beds and fully embracing the task of filling them with compost. Some kids were even spotted coordinating the build from the top of the soil pile! In October, Milton students planted their first round of crops; a delicious mix of arugula, kale, radish, and turnip.



Rachel teaches students how to cultivate at Lewis. Photo credit: HFHK

Our fourth school of the season has been years in the making ever since HFHK first presented to Lewis Duel Language School at an event in 2018. After multiple site visits, conversations with legislators, and requests to City Council for permission to use the grounds of Cool Spring Park next door, we were able to form a partnership with West Side Grows and Green for the Greater Good to use the community garden plots at the newly-restored Rodney Reservoir Community Garden. Lewis was gifted two garden plots and a dedicated water line was installed for the irrigation system. Students and staff were excited and engaged throughout their first planting experience. They can't wait to taste their garden fresh vegetables!

Thank you to the Longwood Foundation for funding these gardens.

"Growing the Future", cont.

(cont. from pg. 1)

Melissa Tracy, teacher at Odyssey Charter School (Spring '18), Maggie Kite, ESL-teacher at McVey Elementary School (2017/Fall '21), and Christy Kerr, principal at Phillip C. Showell Elementary School (Fall '21) were all honored as HFHK's 2022 Champion Cultivators for their outstanding efforts to support and advocate for garden education.

"HFHK was the spark," commented Tracy, "Our K-12th grade program impacts 2,000+ students and it is why I plan to dedicate the second half of my career to being a garden educator and advocate."

"It has just been amazing to watch something real and hands on happen to communicate and grow in our language skills together," stated Kite, "They like everything! It's amazing!"

Kerr, whose advocacy has brought HFHK's program to four additional schools within the Indian River School District remarked, "I have seen the joy it's brought to my students. For me, as an administrator, anything we can do to build community is so important to me. We reap so many benefits."

Keynote speaker, Brianne Studer, Director of Programs at Washington Youth Gardens, not only spoke on their 50 years of garden education within Washington D.C., but impressed upon the guests the multi-faceted value school gardens bring to students. "School gardens increase the positive culture of trying," she remarked. "The seeds we plant today take time to manifest, but they will bloom."

"All of these ripple affects are so hard to capture, but this is how we grow the future. This is the promise of the school garden movement," finished Sarson.

Other guest speakers included Gwen Sullivant representing Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation and Dr. Kathy Shelton, Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Officer at FMC Corporation. FMC was the event's premier sponsor and whose contribution allowed for all garden coordinators to attend at no charge.

Many thanks to all of our sponsors and attendees who helped us raise over \$32,000 - the most for a single event in HFHK history.

SAVE THE DATE: GIVING TUESDAY IS NOVEMBER 29, 2022

Join us on **November 29** for this year's **Giving Tuesday!** Giving Tuesday kicks off Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids' annual giving campaign.

Help us reach **our goal of \$20,000** to support our 2023 "Education Cultivation" program.

We warmly welcome to the Spring 2023 growing season:

East Millsboro Elementary
Lancashire Elementary
Lewes Elementary
Maple Lane Elementary

Make sure to follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) for all updates!

Mark
Your
Calendar!

Get ready to help Delaware students experience the joys of a school garden



Together
we give.

Nov 29, 2022





THANK YOU TO OUR "GROWING THE FUTURE: THE PROMISE OF THE SCHOOL GARDEN MOVEMENT" EVENT SPONSORS

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