



**FOOD
CONNECTS**

FARM TO SCHOOL

IMPACT IN OUR COMMUNITIES



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Townshend Elementary Launches Farm To School!

Townshend Elementary School launched its Farm to School Program in March, opening with a maple syrup tasting event to celebrate the Harvest of the Month. Pre-K through 5th-grade students did a blind taste test of Vermont maple syrup and imitation syrup made with corn syrup. They were asked to guess which syrup was "from the tree." Students also looked at the ingredients in each product and discussed differences like distance traveled to the store and homes and the reasons for different price points of each syrup. Students tasted fresh sap that had been collected that morning.

Townshend Elementary School, along with other Food Connects Farm To School member schools, was awarded a mini-grant by the Windham County Community Advisory Board of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont. They are a volunteer board of dedicated Windham County residents who are local champions of healthy activity and programming of all kinds. The grant will provide vital funding for purchasing ingredients and materials for Harvest of the Month taste tests and seed money for starting a small garden at the school. Townshend teachers have already utilized funds from the grant to purchase a variety of whole grains for students to see, touch, and make art with, as well as some whole-grain bread and plain, refined flour white bread for April's taste test. Garden planning is underway!



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Honors For Our Farm To School Heros!



Two local Food Connects Farm to School champions were honored this year by the School Nutrition Association of Vermont and Hunger Free Vermont—Ali West and Harley Sterling!



Ali cares deeply about all students, and she is committed to equity in her work. She strives to make all students feel welcome, no matter where they are from. That desire inspired her to create the Where in the World are We Eating Program, a monthly program where the entire school community celebrates diversity through their taste buds.

The Outstanding Achievement Award for “Directors or Managers whose efforts exemplify positive attitudes, creativity, and expertise regarding the challenge of providing nutrition services to Vermont students, especially in times of elevated standards, fewer resources, and recently, a pandemic” went to Ali West, Brattleboro Regional Food Service Director for Windham Southeast Supervisory Union (WSESU).



Harley Sterling is laser-focused on one goal—feeding kids the best quality food possible. Throughout 2021, we’ve seen Harley feed more students than ever before, increase his already impressive local purchasing, reimagine how school meals can be used to feed families, and continue to value and champion his staff.

The Innovation and Advocacy Award for “any school nutrition employee who has taken an idea, developed it into a goal, and carried out a specific project to help their program expand student access to quality school, afterschool, and/or summer meals as well as elevate their community’s image of school meals and school nutrition personnel” went to Harley Sterling, Food Service Director for Windham Northeast Supervisory Union (WNESU).

Farm To School is Thriving in Dummerston

For Dummerston School, when it came time to think about priorities for the 2021-2022 school year, it became clear that hiring a part-time garden coordinator to work in the garden and cook in the classroom with students was an essential next step toward growing the program. The Farm To School (FTS) team made contact with Tara Gordon, who was working as a garden coordinator at several other WSESU schools at the time, and she was eager to work with Dummerston students as well.

With a part-time garden coordinator on staff, Dummerston sought grant funding to increase support and grow their program. With help from Food Connects FTS Job Coach Sheila, the team drafted a proposal to the VT Agency of Agriculture and received a \$10,000 Farm to School grant. They are using the funds to purchase equipment and supplies to expand the school garden and grow the garden program, create signage for the garden, and bring in guest educators to work with students on food, farm, and nutrition education.

On May 14, 2022, after many months of planning, approximately 40 parents, community members, and students attended a work day that included the construction of additional garden beds adjacent to the playground so that students could garden and graze during recess. Space was made in the woods for a forest garden with edible ferns and inoculated mushroom logs. Julianne Eagan, Dummerston School Principal, says it best, “I have been so inspired by the Dummerston School community’s passion and commitment to expanding our food production at Dummerston School, integrating the garden into our school curriculum, establishing partnerships with local farms, and realizing the potential of our beautiful and sunny rural campus.”



<p>7,872 bottles of Miller Farm milk</p>	<p>15,426 pounds of beef</p>	<p>73,400 pounds of apples</p>
<p>6,879 pounds of carrots</p>	<p>5,251 loaves of bread</p>	<p>9,420 pounds of potatoes</p>

DID YOU KNOW? Food Connects launched a “Food Explorers” group with the Boys and Girls Club of Brattleboro in partnership with Edible Brattleboro!