



2022-23 IMPACT IN OUR COMMUNITIES



SCHOOL GRANT FUNDING



LOCAL FOOD SOLD TO SCHOOLS

Member Schools: Oak Grove, Green Street, Dummerston, Academy, Brattleboro Union High School, Brattleboro Area Middle School, Putney Central, Westminster Center, Grafton, Saxtons River, Newbrook, Townshend, Jamaica, Leland & Gray Middle and High School, Winston Prouty Early Learning Center. **Additional Participating Schools:** Floodbrook, Twin Valley, Guilford, Vernon.

Kathy Cassin: Sowing Seeds of Curiosity at Academy School



Since 2020, Academy School Garden Coordinator and Food Connects Board Member Kathy Cassin has been working alongside teachers across grade levels to help shape students' attitudes toward food, farming, and nutrition.

With Kindergarteners, Miss Kathy, as she is known to her students, uses Vermont Harvest of the Month (HOM) as a launching pad to challenge preconceived ideas about certain foods. In January, Kathy introduced the students to beet pancakes made with pureed, roasted beets. Kathy lights up when she says that one student announced he was going to be a farmer so he can grow his own beets to make beet pancakes.

In 2nd grade a teacher finishing a plant study unit invited Kathy to organize a culminating feast featuring foods representing all parts of a plant: carrot salad for roots, 'Ants on a Log' for stems and fruit, featuring celery and raisins, and kale chips for leaves. This immersive, hands-on experience makes abstract concepts come alive for young learners.

With a 5th grade class, Kathy collaborated with the teacher to offer monthly cooking sessions as a way to encourage collaboration and lifeskills. Each month students worked in small groups to prepare recipes featuring the HOM. As Kathy reports, "By the end of the school year, they were so good at it that we gave them the recipe, provided the ingredients, and let them go."

As a Garden Coordinator, Kathy says she is inspired when students at a young age make the connection between the food they eat, how it is grown, and how they choose to make this a part of their own lives. When she works with students, she is not just teaching them to cook or appreciate vegetables. She is showing them they can have a direct relationship with the food they eat, where it comes from, and ultimately, with the earth itself.

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Sprout Kits: Near Winter's end, we help bring a little Spring into the classroom. This year we delivered **1,146 sprout kits** to classrooms in **18 schools**. Each student in participating classrooms received their own tray, soil, and seeds for planting, and watched their plants come to life.

Highlights of the Year:

Trauma & Food Workshop: FTS Coach Sheila Humphreys has been collaborating with the Vermont Farm to School Network to advance knowledge and practices across the state on the ways food and trauma are intertwined. In April, Sheila gave a presentation on trauma-informed practices to paraeducators at the Academy School.

Chef Ann Grant: Windham Central Supervisory Union, whose cafeterias are led by food service manager Jake Gallogly, was admitted to the Chef Ann Foundation's Get Schools Cooking program; the goal of this 3-year program will be to help the kitchens in WCSU do more cooking from scratch with fresh ingredients.



Veducation Van: Vermont Garden Network's Veducation Van visited Dummerston, NewBrook, and Townshend Elementary Schools this spring. Educator Cedar Schiewetz cooked latkes and other tasty dishes with kids out of the van's portable kitchen, teaching them about nutrition in the process.



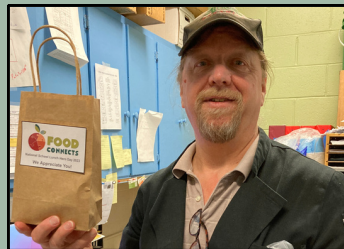
Teacher Professional Development: The Farm to School team conducted Oak Grove's professional development session through an "Iron Chef" Cooking Challenge. The workshop aimed to build teamwork among educators and showcase Farm to School activities, using the Harvest of the Month (HOM) program as an example. In the workshop participants engaged in cooking a dish featuring April's crop, Whole Grains, and conducted a taste test, emulating classroom activities.

Teachers were provided a selection of oils, vinegars, fresh herbs and spices. Each team had a set timeframe to create and serve a unique cold grain and vegetable salad. The HOM program, a statewide initiative, highlights a different nutritious food each month and offers educators resources to seamlessly integrate Farm to School concepts into their classrooms.

The workshop was replicated in August with the Central Elementary School staff to help launch the new school year. This time the workshop highlighted August's HOM crop, Berries, challenging teams to create unique blueberry desserts.

Farm to School Champions: Steve Hed, Food Service Director and Sustainability Coordinator at Putney Central School, and the Central Elementary School FTS Team, were recognized as the 2022 Food Connects FTS Champions. Both teams bridge the gap between their school's gardens and their independently run cafeterias, implementing successful FTS programs embodying the "three C's" of Cafeteria, Classroom, and Community.

Steve's efforts have led to substantial student engagement, with data indicating a 90% consumption rate among students who help grow vegetables like Brussels sprouts in the school garden. Steve also commits to sourcing an average of 21% of his ingredients locally, supporting Vermont's agricultural economy.



Led by school nutrition director Erica Frank and librarian Jody Hauser, the Central FTS team recently received a FTS grant through the VT Agency of Agriculture, which has helped them expand their garden and spread the Harvest of the Month program throughout the school.

Food Connects is proud to honor Steve Hed and Central Elementary School's exemplary contributions to the classroom, garden, kitchen, cafeteria, and broader community.

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