

## **The Crabapple Middle School Learn and Serve Garden**

### **Filling our Neighbors' Plates and Our Students' Minds**

The CMS Learn and Serve Garden grew from a seed of an idea from Science Teachers Glenn Mize and Jeanetta Lewis and Language Arts Teacher Shelley Merritt who wanted to bring their lessons to life in the garden by giving students “get-your-hands-dirty” earth science experiences while giving back to our community. Mr. Mize wanted students to experience beyond the books and couple what he learned in the garden from his father and grandfather. He wanted kids to see “the miracle” of how one seed from a dead plant can be planted and produce a vine that spreads out across the garden and bears fruit that feeds hundreds.

Sixth graders plant the garden during “Go Green Day” in the spring and a dedicated group of parents, teachers and students, water, weed and harvest the garden throughout the summer and the fall. Early morning gardener and Science Teacher, Brittany Donley, reports that, “Students now have a visual of plant cycles as well as learning to serve [their] community.” Mrs. Donley’s enthusiasm for the garden is evident when she talks of the never-ending instruction concepts she can transplant from the garden into the curriculum.

The garden is used as a teaching tool covering the expected earth science topics and has the added bonus of growing fruits, herbs and vegetables that we share with our local community. We donate our produce to the North Fulton County Charities food pantry located on Elkins Road in Roswell. To date we have donated 1093 pounds--over half a ton-- of fresh zucchini (we call them “Super Zukes” because they are so big), yellow squash, tomatoes, basil, okra, beans, peppers, and the locally famous, Mr. Mize’s Mega Melons. Our biggest, a 40-pound watermelon, was delivered to NFCC at the beginning of the school year by Mr. Mize himself!

NFCC Volunteer Coordinator Kevin Tracy is grateful for the harvest that we share with NFCC families. He told us that the families that come to NFCC cannot afford to buy fresh organic fruits and vegetables. Therefore, what Crabapple Middle School brings to their table is a luxury. Mr. Tracy noted that many families who come to them are on dietary restrictions because of medical conditions. Some of these folks are on chemotherapy and sometimes cannot eat canned foods because the traces of metal (such as aluminum) interfere with chemo. “To these families,” he says, “the fresh produce from your garden is a blessing.”

A grant from the State of Georgia helped provide start-up funds two years ago. However, the garden is now sustained by a dedicated group of teachers, parents and students with a little sweat, a lot of ingenuity and a little bit of PTA funding. Liz Rains, life-long gardener, parent and PTA Chair of “Go Green Day,” envisions the garden to “become a part of the everyday curriculum at CMS.” The learning potential is so great for the garden that it transcends science and has opportunities for math, social studies, language arts as well as service to the community. Mrs. Rains adds, “We fed a lot of families this summer. It is such an incredible feeling to produce something that has a purpose.” Dr. Nathan Buhl, CMS Principal agrees, “The

Learn and Serve garden is a prime example of students demonstrating in a tangible way the benefits of using their knowledge and resources to make a difference in the local community. Leveraging resources to impact the world around them is a quality we want to instill in our students.”

We LOVE hearing kids say (or rather, shout), “Wow! I planted that!” as a now seventh-grader did when he saw the garden for the first time this school year as his Social Studies Teacher used an outdoor classroom nearby.

Stay Tuned: Crabapple Middle School has a way to Grow! We are working on growing the garden for more student interaction. More to come!

For more information, please contact: Anne Fallon, PTA Campus Beautification Chair, [thefallons@verizon.net](mailto:thefallons@verizon.net), Liz Rains, PTA “Go Green Day” Chair at [rains97@mac.com](mailto:rains97@mac.com) or Glenn Mize, Science Teacher, Crabapple Middle School at [mize1@fultonschools.org](mailto:mize1@fultonschools.org)

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