



How Does Your Garden Grow?

THE GREEN VILLAGE INITIATIVE COMES TO TOWN

BY | EILEEN WEBER

THE SMELL of fresh loam. Seedlings bursting with new life in little peat pots. A gaggle of kids joking and laughing, eager for their shovel-ready project. What could be better on a sunny spring day?

For Amie Guyette Hall, a certified holistic health counselor and founder of From Your Inside Out, this is as good as it gets. Hall has worked with Fairfield's school system to plant organic gardens at each campus. So far, 11 of 16

schools have a functional school garden or are in the process of building one. On April 30, North Stratfield Elementary School became the latest school to break ground on their organic garden, and Hall was there to lend a hand. She maintains that it's important for people to realize that gardens are a teaching tool. Kids learn about farming and good eating habits as well as math, science, and even art.

Hall has not been

alone in her efforts. Her predecessors include Dan Smith, a kindergarten teacher at Mill Hill Elementary School, who kicked off Fairfield's first school garden in 2004; and Annelise McCay, a member of several organic gardening and school-lunch organizations including Fuel for Learning Partnership, was the force behind the picket-fenced organic farm installed at Roger Sherman Elementary School in 2006.

Like plants that have grown beyond their bounds, Hall and McCay were eager to expand beyond school grounds. To that end, they met recently with Westport's Green Village Initiative (GVI), a grassroots nonprofit established in 2008 to support local environmental and community change. Advice came from GVI founder Dan Levinson; Peter Gorman, chef at Unquowa School; and Pam Jones, a transactional

FROM THE FIELD

attorney, Democratic Party RTM for District 3, and co-founder of Fairfield's Organic Teaching Farm.

Jones pointed out that Fairfield originally had over 200 working farms. Today, the town has only one, and that farm's land lease will be up in four years. Because of that, she felt it was important to get the ball rolling in Fairfield.

So what's Fairfield GVI's first task? "It starts in the garden. It's about sustainable living," said Gorman, who uses ingredients from Unquowa's school garden to make pesto for the cafeteria. "From pre-K to

eighth grade, every single student has picked vegetables and flowers from the garden. We educate these kids to do things

can realize that goal. We all have to eat and take care of ourselves. Instead of sending the kids mixed messages on nutrition, we

FAIRFIELD ORIGINALLY HAD OVER 200 WORKING FARMS. TODAY, THE TOWN HAS ONLY ONE.

elsewhere." The school also sponsors a four-week summer farm camp now in its third year, which is currently sold out.

"It's education first, then awareness, and everything else follows," says Hall. "Our first project is the school gardens because we

need to teach them how to be healthy."

McCay readily agrees that a garden is instrumental in a child's education, but she feels there's more to it than that. "Fairfield has lost its agricultural roots," she says, mirroring Jones's comment about

Fairfield's farming industry. "One by one, farms have disappeared. I find it heartbreaking."

Fairfield GVI's goal is to link school gardens with farms in the area, a mission Hall and McCay hope to meet within two years. For these gardening enthusiasts, growing your own food and supporting local farms is one of the best ways to cultivate a tight-knit community.

For more information or to volunteer, contact Amie Hall at amieghall@aol.com, or Annelise McCay at ajmccay@sbcglobal.net.

DISCOVER A HEALTHY GETAWAY AT THE PERFECT PRICE



\$49

Introductory
1-hour
massage session



\$74

Introductory
1½-hour
massage session



\$98

Introductory
1½-hour Hot Stone
therapy session

Three great reasons to see why we're ranked #1 in massage services:

FAIRFIELD
2279 Black Rock Turnpike
Across from Trader Joe's
(203) 333-3689

Massage Envy®

Franchises Available | MassageEnvy.com | Convenient Hours Open 7 days. M-F 9am-10pm, Sat 8am-8pm, Sun 10am-6pm

**Ranked #1 by Entrepreneur Magazine. *Session includes massage and time for consultation and dressing. Prices subject to change. Rates and services may vary by location. Additional local taxes and fees may apply. ©2009 Massage Envy Limited, LLC.