

MAKING WAVES AT DCS



Growing Healthier Eaters

by Francie Wesorick, Dexter Farm to School Program Coordinator

(Story originally published in the Spring/ Summer 2023 issue of "Connected," the 5 Healthy Towns Foundation magazine).



In 2013, the Dexter Farm to School program began as a partnership between the Dexter Community Schools, Dexter Wellness Coalition, and 5 Healthy Towns Foundation. Two coalition members, Brad Judge, MD, and Shirley Bitters, were instrumental in forming the proposals and getting Dexter Farm to School off the ground. The goal of the program is to teach students where food comes from, show students how to prepare food, and to encourage students to eat more fruits and vegetables.

Our program works closely with the Dexter Schools staff, students, and volunteers. The program maintains a school garden on the Creekside Intermediate School campus. The Program Coordinator, Francie Wesorick, oversees the garden and garden activities. Students and volunteers start planting

seeds in the school greenhouse in the Spring and grow a variety of flowers, vegetables, herbs, and fruit over the summer.

The garden provides many learning and volunteer opportunities for Dexter students. The school garden is a beautiful source of pride in the Dexter Community School District. Gardening sparks curiosity in students and uses all of the five senses. Hands-on learning helps students learn important, problem-solving skills, and it helps students build confidence in their abilities. Our goal is to engage students in growing food, so that they will feel more encouraged to taste new foods.

Students get the opportunity to participate in both gardening and cooking activities during daily Kitchen/Garden classes. Students learn how to follow a recipe, use kitchen tools, and



plan and prepare nutritious food. Gardening gives kids a new perspective on food, and cooking gives them real-life skills.

In the garden and kitchen classroom, we hear many excited voices saying things such as:

“I can’t believe we made this, it’s so good!”

“I never knew black beans tasted like this!”

“I made dinner for my whole family, and they loved it!”

“Making salsa is so easy!”

“Can we try the turnips we picked today?”

“Can I get a copy of this recipe?”

“Our kitchen garden program provides real-world, hands-on, applicable learning that transfers to classroom content as well as building life experiences,” says Creekside Principal Tammy Reich.

Kelly Parachek, 5th grade teacher, says, “The energy and excitement the students bring to the class is infectious. They are excited to learn how to make different recipes and try new things that they might not normally try.”

The Creekside Lifetime Fitness (Physical Education) classes cook in the Kitchen classroom throughout the school year. Teacher Angie Scott says, “We are so grateful for our Creekside Kitchen and Garden program! Without it, we would not be able to bring to life many of our Lifetime Fitness Nutrition lessons.”

The Dexter Farm to School program relies on many volunteers and donations to keep it running smoothly. To volunteer or to donate to the program, please email dextergardens@gmail.com, or to find out more and keep up on current events, please visit the website www.dexterfarm2school.org.

“Dexter Community Schools has been a wonderful and supportive partner for many years,” says Wesorick. “We’re looking forward to another fun growing season with the Dexter students!”

CREEKSIDE IN THE COMMUNITY:

This Saturday, May 20th, the Dexter Garden Club will host the Dexter Green Day Perennial & Native Plant Sale, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at the Dexter Gazebo in Monument Park on Main Street. **Creekside students will be selling vegetable starters and herbs started from seed by Kitchen & Garden students at Creekside School and at the Gazebo. All plants are \$3 each, cash or check only, and any money raised goes to the Creekside Kitchen/Garden Program.**