

FALL 2010

WATCH US GROW

A Newsletter for the Madison-Avanti Giving Garden



MADISON-AVANTI GIVING GARDEN

Where Kids, Community & Learning Thrive

Updates from the Garden



Summer in the Garden

A huge thanks to all of the volunteers that helped keep our garden growing over the summer! Families signed up for weekly commitments to water and tend the garden throughout this the summer and all did a fantastic job. Several hardworking folks got most of our irrigation system operational mid summer. This will be a key part to the sustainability of our garden. Thanks to the summer TLC, the students were welcomed back to school with a bountiful fall garden of big pumpkins, tomatoes, potatoes, cabbage, squash, herbs, berries & more! Volunteers from Madison and the community also harvested and delivered over 250 lbs of fresh garden produce to the Thurston County Food Bank this summer. In early September, Madison AmeriCorps member, Sara LaPlante organized a large AmeriCorps work party where volunteers worked on many garden related projects including painting the picnic tables, spreading gravel, and

building the strawberry patch on the outside of the garden's south fence.

Harvest Celebration

We enjoyed our first Harvest Celebration on October 1st. The party marked the day of our very first "Farmstand Friday" and students enjoyed many fun activities such as a garden scavenger hunt lead by 5th graders, face painting by Avanti students & AmeriCorps volunteers, garden arts, and live music from some talented Avanti students. We look forward to another celebration next fall! One Madison parent has already expressed an interest in pressing apple cider next year. Do you have an activity in mind that would be fun for a future celebration? Next summer we will bring together a planning committee and would welcome your contributions!

Farmstand Fridays



FOR MORE INFORMATION

kate_stoll@yahoo.com

Get Involved



Volunteer

There are many ways you can volunteer at the Madison-Avanti Giving Garden. We need folks to help with garden education on Thursdays and on the six Farmstand Fridays throughout the school year. We also need recess volunteers to explore the garden with students. Contact kate_stoll@yahoo.com for info.

Garden Meeting!



**Join us for our first
Garden Meeting of
the school year
Tuesday November 9th
from 6:30-8:00pm!**

We will be providing updates about the garden and discussing the next phase - an ecological education garden to occupy the space where the pumpkin patch was this fall. All are invited to attend! Your input and involvement will keep our garden growing!

Check out Facebook

We have a great Facebook page which includes updates about the garden, notifications about upcoming work parties and many wonderful photos and slide show courtesy of Steven Herppich. Check it out by going to facebook.com and searching for "Madison Avanti." You do not have to have a Facebook account to look at our page. Enjoy!

Grant Updates (cont)

We have an exciting partnership with the Thurston County Food Bank (TCFB) and have been working together to find innovative ways to improve delivery and consumption of healthy fruits and vegetables by our students. The Madison-Avanti Giving Garden is piloting a new Farmstand project which we believe will be a fun and effective tool in achieving this goal. Students from Madison will be sampling food from the garden throughout the school year. The TCFB will then assist us in identifying similar items which will be purchased or donated from local farms. This produce will be similar to what is grown in our garden and will be available to our students at a Farmstand which will be open 6 times throughout the year. We had our first Farmstand on October 1st and it was a big hit! After the Farmstand, some Madison students munched down rainbow carrots, fresh peas, and cherry tomatoes for an after school snack. Others took their veggies home to cook for dinner with their families. Our most recent Farmstand on November 5th included cabbage, broccoli, kohlrabi, carrots & apples. Students were invited to sample coleslaw & were offered recipe cards. This has been a positive experience for both the Madison students who “shop” at the stand and the Avanti students who run it. The last Farmstand Friday of 2010 is scheduled for December 3rd.

Garden Education

Madison and Avanti students have been working and learning together on Thursday afternoons. This program is lead by our Garden Educator, Kerri Wilson, whose position is supported through the Thurston County Food Bank School Gardens Program. This fall they have been focusing on the fall harvest and getting the garden ready for winter. They have planted cold hardy veggies, garlic and a cover crop of fava beans, and enjoyed sampling a variety of crops from the garden. Through the school year, this program will focus on different aspects of the garden from worms and soil to seeds and starts. Each Madison classroom will have an opportunity to participate in this program about once per month.

We have also had some wonderful nutrition education taking place inside the school as well. Sue Duffy, from the Food Sense nutrition education program has been using our garden produce for her lessons. Thanks to Mrs. Stillwell for introducing her class to pesto which they made using basil from our garden. Madison parent, Katya Miltimore recently shared her talent with a cooking lesson in the third grade classroom where they enjoyed Borscht and learning about food and culture in Russia. Students were asking for second and even third helpings of this cabbage & beet soup!

Garden Construction

Thanks to a generous donation from Eastside neighbors, Dave and Joellen Wilhelm, we now have a beautiful gazebo in the garden. This gazebo will provide protection from the weather and allow for a much needed outdoor classroom space. It was constructed on site by community and Avanti volunteers. We are currently seeking funding for a metal roof for the gazebo.

You may notice four new concrete slabs bordering the pumpkin patch area. These were installed by many volunteers with the leadership of Madison parent, Michael Miltimore. Three of them will hold brand new picnic tables which were purchased by a neighborhood matching grant through the City of Olympia, sponsored by the Eastside Neighborhood Association. The 4th slab will be the foundation for our new Greenhouse which was purchased with a grant from Lowe's.

In the coming months expect to see more construction happening in the garden with the addition of the Farmstand counter and more whimsical art cutouts to adorn the fence. These cutouts were designed by Madison students & are being cut out by wood shop students at Olympia High School. Stay tuned for upcoming work parties to complete installation of the greenhouse, wall caps and more.



Above: Avanti students operate the Farmstand for the Madison student patrons. Front: Madison students explore the fall garden.



Photographs by Steven Herppich