

Grow For It!

Spring has finally sprung in Michigan and eager hands are adding compost to wake up their school garden soil, planting seeds, even harvesting greens and radishes under the guidance of service members across the state.

This has been an exciting last couple of months for FoodCorps Michigan. In April, we hosted the entire national FoodCorps team in Detroit to learn from local leaders about food access, discuss racism in the food system, and share all that Michigan's food scene has to offer! We were proud to show off Michigan's bounty of good food activism and reinvigorated to return and continue serving our communities.

Each of our service members has been working on some major projects over the last few months. In Traverse City Kirsten

and Daniel put on a successful full-day farm to school training for educators.



In Detroit, Jen's students competed in Michigan's Junior Chef competition. Check out the recipe of the month to try out one of their creations! Whitney's Food Warriors have been making visits to D-Town Farm to do scavenger hunts, plant seeds, and play decomposition freeze tag. And in the article below, you'll read

about how Jana has been helping kids eat right and exercise during events focused on healthy food and dance.

In Flint Dennis organized a successful event in conjunction with Burpee's Grow Anywhere tour during which Flint residents were given free vegetables and plants as well as the opportunity to meet with community food organizations that were represented. Many people left the event newly enrolled in 'Double Up Food Bucks!' and with their arms brimming with cucumbers, tomatoes, and peppers. We're looking forward to a busy summer!

FoodCorps Michigan Updates:

We are excited to announce that MSU Extension in Chippewa County will be a new service site next year. Looking forward to having FoodCorps representation in the UP!

*Through the hands and minds of young leaders,
FoodCorps Strives to give all youth an enduring
Relationship to healthy food.*

The Arugula Connection

In the hoop house at Platte River Elementary in Honor, Michigan, robust rows of spinach, arugula, and radishes filled the garden with a green glow as sunshine poured in through the plastic covering. It was early May and the seeds that fourth and fifth graders had planted in April, when the ground was still damp and cold, were now full plants, ready for harvest.

As the school garden coordinator, I feel responsible for planning, seeding, and harvesting school garden produce *with* the classes—meaning that I intend to be there for each step in the process. So when I received an email from 5th grade teacher Sarah Slade asking if her students could harvest the vegetables to bring to the school kitchen for the salad bar, I wasn't going to hold them back.

However, in order to connect the classroom, garden, and cafeteria, there were a few more steps involved

and most importantly, relationships to cultivate. From my experience, there is a wide communication gap in most school buildings between the kitchen and the classroom. This gap splits the school into two separate realms; classrooms are for teaching, lunchrooms are for eating. Mrs. Slade wanted to bridge that divide.

On the cafeteria side, I spoke with

Joann Ingleston, the Kitchen Leader at Platte River Elementary, early in the morning. She was hesitant at first, telling me she did not have time to harvest and wash the greens. She had her hands full with breakfast and lunch service. While she sounded resistant, she expressed that she wanted to use the garden vegetables, asking if Mrs. Slade's class could harvest and wash the arugula and spinach. She would be happy to provide containers and the salad spinner.

On the classroom side, I informed Mrs. Slade about the food safety guidelines for harvesting and washing school garden produce. I told her that Joann could provide the containers and salad spinner if she picked them up from the kitchen. Sarah was uncertain that Joann would lend her those items. "Are you sure?" she asked. "I can just go down to the kitchen and ask?" Confused by her wariness, I encouraged her to just *try*. At this point I felt like I was playing telephone, connecting two people who worked in the same building.

After I spoke with each of them, encouraging them to simply reach out, I held my breath and waited. Turns out, Sarah and Joann *did* connect. The fifth grade class

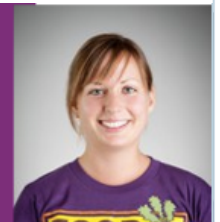
harvested and washed the arugula, greens, and radishes and brought them to the kitchen. Joann put the garden produce on the salad bar for lunch on Thursday, and it was a hit! The kids' response was amazing: the fifth graders were proud of their garden skills and excited to share the greens with their peers. Students liked to compare the sweetness of the spinach and the pepperiness of the arugula, voting for their favorite.

Joann noticed the students' positive response to the garden produce. She acknowledged that this classroom and cafeteria connection really worked and she appreciated the help from teachers and students to prepare the produce.

My hope is that this experience set a precedent, which can be used as a model for the future to connect the realms of the classroom, garden, and cafeteria. Above all, I hope that the divide between the teachers and food service became a little less intimidating in their minds on that day when we served garden greens in the lunchroom. Relationships and trust take time to develop; I believe that we have begun to cultivate something new here.



Kirsten Gerbatsch serves with the Michigan Land Use Institute in Traverse City



Slow-Cooking, Fast-Moving Fun for Families in Inkster

One of my favorite things about serving with the Center for School Health at Wayne State is attending school-wide events that students and teachers organize themselves.

As part of the Building Healthy Communities program, my schools have hosted events to promote healthy eating and physical activity throughout the year,

varying from passing out smoothies at parent conferences to hosting a community health fair. One school decided to put on three events to celebrate food and culture by inviting a dance instructor from particular region of the world and serving food from that place. The end goal was to have fun and teach families and students how to prepare healthy, economical, and delicious meals using a crock-pot!



The most memorable such event I attended this year was at Gaudior Academy in Inkster. An instructor of African dance came dressed

in traditional West-African attire to teach students and families a few moves! The event was well attended, with students of all ages and their family members.

When it came time to get up and dance, the majority of students (including

several boys, which the instructor was pleasantly surprised to see)

participated, but a handful of adults went up as well! The dancing went on for nearly an hour, so the almost 50 people in attendance did a lot of physical activity. It was a well-planned family event that brought people together to dance, learn about a new culture, and build a strong school community.

At the end of the dance session, Mr. Jose, the teacher who helped a group of

students plan the event, announced that they had prepared a sampling of foods for everyone to try. They used a portion of their grant money funds from Fuel Up To Play 60 to purchase a few crock-pots for cooking at the event. The team of students prepared two varieties of traditional barbeque, one with chicken and the other with beef, and served it with fresh Romaine lettuce leaves; the finished product was very similar to a "lettuce wrap." The students who helped prepare the meal arrived very early to school that day to marinate the meat and chop vegetables to add to the crock-pot dishes. They also helped serve the food to students and families at the event, so their leadership could be

felt throughout the entire process. It was a very fun event and I'm glad I was able to be a part of it!

This event really showed me the power of student leadership and cooperation in making such an event possible.

The students

were so proud of the meal they had prepared and shared with others. They exemplified the power of food in bringing people together!



Jana Nakhleh serves with WSU's Center for School Health in Detroit

CSA: Community Supported Awesomeness

FoodCorps serves a vision of food that puts health at the heart of both education and celebration at schools. Since our FoodCorps service strategy in Northwest Michigan involves twice a month visits to each of our schools, my fellow service member, Kirsten Gerbatsch, and myself simply do not have enough time at each of our school buildings to transform school culture by our efforts alone. Lasting change will take the vision and action of an entire school community to excite and engage students in food and fitness for a healthy lifestyle.

Kirsten and I were thrilled to see an example of a school doing just that when we received an invitation to participate in the very first "Fitness and Fun Friday" coordinated by the staff at Interlochen Elementary School. The 4th and 5th grade teachers committed math time in the morning for us to team up with their students to practice measurement, fractions, and recipe writing while making three different healthy snacks. After a special announcement and the introduction of "Eye of the Tiger" over the loudspeaker, the school transformed into a playground of health and fitness fun. In an art



room repurposed as a café we worked with the help of awesome Traverse City West Senior High School Titan Football team role models, to pass out the three snack creations.

As the foods circulated, 4th and 5th graders proudly described cooking techniques and nutrition facts for the

foods we prepared. Mr. Gresso's 4th grade shared that the fiber in the class' whole grain granola allows your body to absorb energy from food over a longer period of time. Students from Ms. McGrew's 4th grade class prepared a "Green Cannelini Bean Dip" and explained that the bean dip included Kale from 9 Bean Rows Farm to give it the green color and extra flavor. Mr. Edwardson's 5th grade class, who used the same trick of blending in Kale for "Mean Green Smoothies" encouraged

hesitant younger students to try their smoothie by explaining the tasty fruits used in the recipe.

At the end of each wave of students we gave a huge round of applause to the 4th and 5th grade students and to families who donated ingredients to make our healthy snack sampler and Fitness & Fun Friday a huge success. Our round of applause needs to extend also to the Jeff Adamick, the Custodian has become the school hydroponic farmer by who carefully tending to an indoor library garden and to Jane Fouchey, the Administrative Assistant who stewards the outdoor garden along with her husband. Such efforts and vision of the school

staff have made it possible for additional volunteers including master gardeners to contribute their talents and create a positive place to grow student's lifelong excitement for healthy foods.



Daniel Marbury serves with the Michigan Land Use Institute in Traverse City and will be acting as FoodCorps Michigan's Fellow next year!



Photo of the Month



One of Jen's students at Pierce Middle in Redford excitedly added compost to revive the soil and planted broccoli and strawberries on a sunny May afternoon!

Stats Tracker

SINCE AUGUST 15, 2012:

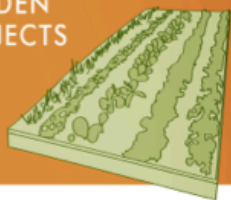
3,283

CHILDREN
REACHED



13

GARDEN
PROJECTS



463

LBS OF PRODUCE
HARVESTED
FOR KIDS



106

COMMUNITY
VOLUNTEERS



Cooking Tip

Strawberry Gazpacho:

Jen's students at Pierce Middle's Team Nutrition! competed at Michigan's Junior Chef Competition with this recipe they developed!

- 2 Cups fresh or frozen strawberries
- 1 Cup sweet onions, chopped
- 1 Cucumber, diced
- 1 lime, juiced
- Salt & Pepper

Combine ingredients in large bowl, let sit in a refrigerator to marinate for up to 8 hours. Blend in a food processor until smooth. Pour, serve, and enjoy!