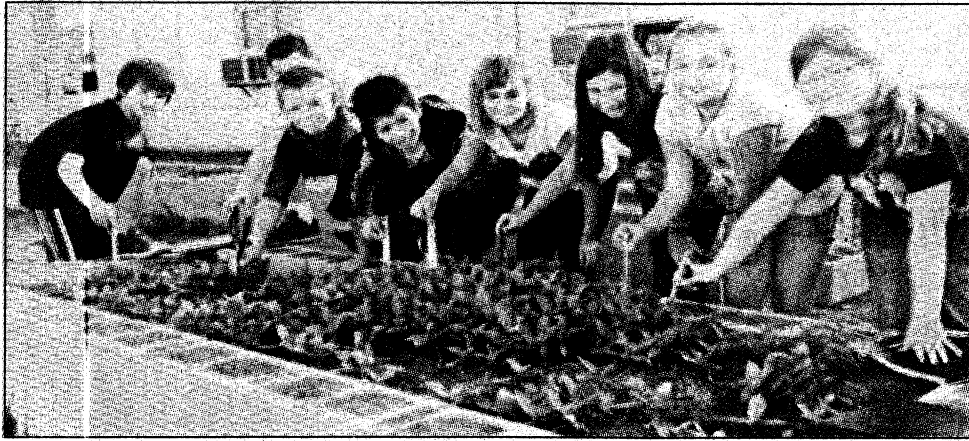


Lutie school promotes learning through school garden and sustainable farm tour

Oct 14 2015



Students in Christi West's fourth grade class at Lutie School have recently been learning through a green medium, the school's new garden. The students here are measuring the height of zinnia seeds they planted earlier this year and calculating the growth through several weeks. Pictured, from right, are Timber Brockett, Alyssa Wensel, Maddie Petter, Haley Dant, Nicholas Dextre, Austin Wensel, Aiden Chilson, Seth Johnson.

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One might imagine children sitting at desks solving problems from textbooks during a math lesson, and many times that would be an accurate scenario at Lutie School. But lately, the students also have been found outside with their hands in the dirt, crouched around a cinder block garden border holding rulers up to green sprouts and carefully copying the measurements into their notebooks.

"The zinnias have grown a lot since the last time we measured them. The last time

we measured them was (Sept.) the 24th, and on the 24th mine was 2 inches," Seth Johnson, a fourth grader, said when the *Times* recently visited the school's new garden. "It's grown 3 inches since then."

The newly developed raised-bed gardens at Lutie School were established last year using a financial contribution from an anonymous donor, superintendent Scot Young told the *Times*. Seven raised beds were built from cinder blocks last April after the donation was received, but the beds were too wet to plant after the unseasonably wet



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spring and summer seasons. This fall, however, the beds are ready, and several teachers have adopted one and are utilizing them in their curriculum.

"The students are studying in science what things plants need - they need space, light, nutrition," said fourth-grade teacher Christi West. "We're also integrating math into it. Every time we come out, we see how much they've grown since the last time. We hadn't covered adding and subtracting fractions until we started measuring the sprouts, so it's been a new venture in learning."

Young says the school is planning to expand the number of beds after White River Valley Electric Cooperative moves an electric pole that currently occupies a corner of the space. A pergola is also planned for later this year, and the school is currently accepting bids from local artists interested in painting sections of the three concrete block walls that surround the garden area. Interested artists are encouraged to call Young at 417-273-4274 or email syoung@wtuteschool.com.

"I think it's an important thing to have at a school," Young said. "Food is essential to all of us, and it's important that our children understand where it comes from."

Students, families and community members are welcome to stop by Lutie School to see the gardens from 3 to 6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 23, during parent/teacher conferences. Amelia LaMair will be handing out free garden seeds and snacks made from local produce.

Sustainable farm tour

The school's garden hasn't been the only agriculture-based learning tool Lutie has used lately. A recent farm tour provided a group of students with a practical look at a nearby working farm.

Ten students from middle school and high school agricul-



photo submitted

ture classes spent Sept. 16 at Jeff and Rachel Barry's 17-acre sustainable farm in Douglas County. The farm utilizes a variety of sustainable agriculture techniques for growing different fruits and vegetables and raising heritage-breed pigs, laying hens and Dexter and Jersey cattle.

The trip was funded through the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Youth Educator grant awarded to the Brixy-area non-profit One Garden Inc. The grant project, entitled "Engaging Youth in Sustainable Agriculture through Hands-on Experience," was intended to introduce Lutie students to farming techniques that can be applied in the school garden or in home gardens. Jeff and Rachel Barry led the group through the tour of their farm, which was organized by LaMair, the project coordinator. Agriculture teacher Derek Cornett and bus driver Cody Yarger also attended.

The group toured the Barrys' two high tunnels and outdoor gardens where tomatoes, peppers, basil, rhubarb, potatoes, blueberries, hops, strawberries, leeks, garlic and several other crops are grown. The students learned how different crops grow at different times of year and discussed which vegetables could be planted now and grown into the winter.

While touring the area holding chickens, pigs and cows, the students learned how the animals provide fertility and food

Lutie High School and Middle School students recently visited Jeff and Rachel Barry's 17-acre sustainable farm and engaged in several hands-on learning activities. Here the students are inoculating a white oak log with shiitake mushroom spawn. Pictured, from left, are senior Jordan Brewer, Junior Donnia Burks, farm owner Jeff Barry, eighth grader Austin Petter and senior Emily Doyle.

while utilizing garden waste and plant matter that humans can't eat. Jeff explained how he and his wife conserve resources by using solar energy to pump and heat water, and how hand tools are used rather than gas-powered machines most of the time. The lesson also included information on composting, mulching, beneficial insects, cover crops, no-till gardening, crop and livestock rotation, water conservation, the difference between annual and perennial plants and the joys and hardships of farming.

After the tour, students had a hands-on experience inoculating white oak logs with shiitake mushroom spawn, making cider from locally grown apples, planting cover crops in the pig pen, harvesting and chopping tomatoes, making salad dressing and cooking peppers for lunch. The students were able to take in some of their hard work with a farm-raised lunch of beef burritos with tomatoes and peppers, a mixed-greens salad and apple crisp utilizing the produce and meat the

Barrys had produced.

After lunch the students reviewed what they had learned, and everyone shared his or her favorite part of the day. The animals were very popular, especially the pigs. LaMair said, Austin Petter, a student in the Exploring Agriculture class, liked the pigs best "because they ate everything, and it was awesome." Several students also commented that they enjoyed crushing the apples for cider and eating the different food items in their lunch.

Natural Resources student Emily Doyle thought "the way of life and how it's so much different" was the most interesting part of the farm, and Donna Burks commented that "farming benefits not just the farmer but everyone else."

The students came up with ideas about what to grow in the garden at school. LaMair said watermelon got the most votes, followed by lettuce, spinach, asparagus, potatoes, basil, tomatoes, peppers and garlic.