



## For Immediate Release

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### **Grandview's School Garden Helps Students See the Classroom through a New Lens**

Elementary-aged kids can learn a lot from a garden. Planting and nurturing a seed through the stages of its life can teach them responsibility and teamwork. Preparing the garden can help a child gain an appreciation of the outdoors and a sense of environmental responsibility. Teachers can use the garden as a hands-on way to study a variety of subjects. Perhaps the most obvious, children can learn about nutrition and where their food comes from. "Coming from the Kansas City metro area, I assumed kids here (in Higginsville) would have a connection with what they eat and know the process of growing it from seed," said Sandy Foster, a volunteer with the Higginsville C-1 School District. "You think about school gardens being in urban areas, but there's a need for them in the rural environment too."

Foster took over the Grandview Elementary garden this January, but the garden has been in use for years. In seasons past, the ag students from the high school tilled the garden and the after-school program kids began planting as early as St. Patrick's Day. Unfortunately, this year's late snows and continuous rains made it impossible to till until the last week of school. Foster, her daughter Hadassah and friend Denaia managed to plant a few rows of tomatoes, peppers, cauliflower, watermelons, dill and lavender. Collectively, they tend the garden, carrying water in watering cans from a nearby faucet. "Hopefully, because of the late start, we'll be able to push things into August," Foster said. "I'm hopeful that especially the tomatoes and peppers will keep going until the kids come back in the fall."

Nearly every school in the United States had a garden in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but they fell out of popularity after World War II. Today, thanks to renewed interest in the environment and nutrition, gardens are returning to schools all over the U.S. California has a "Garden in Every School" program, and many schools are using gardens to promote healthy activity and eating. But those aren't the only subjects being studied in school gardens. Math students learn to measure the distance between seeds and the area of plots. Science students learn botany and physical science, as well as use the gardens for controlled experiments. Art students can sketch the plants and reading classes can plant seeds mentioned in their books. "It's seeing the classroom through a new lens," Foster said.

She hopes to inspire the Grandview students to community service by taking the harvested vegetables to a local food pantry. Meanwhile, since the garden is right next to the playground area, it can provide a new source of healthy activity. "My idea is that at recess the kids can play if they want to, or if they want to, they can pull weeds or water the garden," Foster said.

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The garden is small now, but the school has plenty of room for it to expand. Foster hopes to one day grow enough food to supplement the school cafeteria. “The plan is to get the kids involved in the whole cycle, from planting to harvesting to eating,” Foster said. Many schools have found that kids will eat vegetables they’ve grown themselves. Ultimately, Foster would like to see the elementary school’s little plot grow into a community garden. “Ideally, it’s parents, it’s kids, it’s teachers; it’s everybody coming together to make it happen,” she said.

For more information about Live Healthy Live Well, contact Tom Corporon at 660.259.2440. You may also visit [LiveHealthyLiveWell.org](http://LiveHealthyLiveWell.org).

### **About Live Healthy Live Well**

Live Healthy Live Well partners include Health Care Collaborative (HCC) of Rural Missouri and University of Missouri Extension as well as various stakeholders committed to making Lafayette County a healthier place to live, work and play. Live Healthy Live Well is a Social Innovation for Missouri program funded in part through the Missouri Foundation for Health. HCC serves as the fiscal agent.

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