

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MCPS Issues New School Vegetable Garden Guidelines

Eighteen Month Long Community Campaign Results in New Learning Opportunities for County Children

Rockville, MD - The Montgomery County Public School System has just put online new guidelines for schools that want to grow vegetable or "edible" gardens on site. Those guidelines can be read at

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/outdoored/>

These new guidelines come after a more than year long community campaign for the gardens that included educational work, public testimony in front of the county council, and an open letter to Superintendent Jerry Weast advocating for the gardens, which was signed by more than 30 Montgomery County organizations, including the Montgomery County Commission on Health.

"We are delighted that Montgomery County Public Schools have responded to the community demand for vegetable gardening in schools," said Gordon Clark, Project Director of Montgomery Victory Gardens, which led the advocacy campaign. "We view this as a first step toward planting of the full range of vegetable gardens that are currently being employed at schools throughout the nation."

Added Sheryl Freishtat, President of the UME Master Gardeners of Montgomery County, "We are thrilled that MCPS has taken this step forward, and in addition to the new container gardening guidelines that have just been released, will also allow properly planned in-ground vegetable gardens. Vegetable gardening offers wonderful opportunities to learn about food by growing and tasting fresh vegetables, and we know that students who grow vegetables are more likely to eat them, along with more fresh, healthy food."

The Master Gardeners, which were partners in the advocacy campaign, are now offering trained personal support to those schools that wish to establish vegetable gardens. Their contact information is included in the new MCPS guidelines.

Audubon Naturalist Society is another county organization that is offering support to MCPS schools that want to grow food. Their GreenKids program, an educational outreach partnership with MCPS, is initiating a pilot project called "Salad Science" this spring through which six elementary schools will grow lettuce using container gardens designed and built specially for

GreenKids by a local Boy Scout troop. "This is an exciting opportunity for us to connect children with nature while providing teachers with truly motivational tools for engaging students in scientific inquiry," explained Diane Lill, GreenKids Project Director. "We hope to create a brighter and healthier future for MCPS students and teachers, one salad at a time." The GreenKids program can be found at www.ansgreenkids.org

The groups noted that even more educational support for the gardens will be made available this spring. To help educators and parents learn more about incorporating vegetable gardening into the school curriculum, Montgomery College and the University of Maryland Extension's Master Gardeners are teaming up to offer a new Continuing Education class which will be held April 19-21, 2011. To learn more about this class and register, interested individuals can visit their website at <http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/wdce/bits.html> and search for Garden Educator Training (MGT354), or call 240-567-5188.

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