

Farm to School Grow Roots in Northeast Kingdom

Coventry, Vermont - October 2, 2009

Chicken fingers and pizza have long been favorites in the school cafeteria. They are cheap and easy to serve. But one group in the Northeast Kingdom is pushing a new menu.

When the school day ends kids in Coventry make their way to the athletic field. Not to practice soccer but to pick their produce.

"We harvested Okra, some carrots," said 5th grader Kaylee Bowen.

They are all part of the Green Mountain Farm-to-School program.

"They get to participate in planting, harvesting and preparing foods under the assumption those kids are involved in those activities and are willing to try new foods and make healthy food choices," says Katherine Sims of the Green Mountain Farm to School program.

This harvest will end up in the cafeteria, fresh food grown just yards away from the lunch room.

"There is nothing like watching a kid trying a beet stick for the first time and having a huge smile, and they are saving bites to share with their parents," says Sims.

Coventry is just one of the schools in the program. 14 others are participating in the farm-to-school program in the Northeast Kingdom. It lives off funding from grants, foundations and contributions from taxpayers.

Eating local food in the cafeteria is a trend but there are challenges, there's the cost, and the growing season schedule does not line up with classroom schedule. And then there is one more thing nobody can control: the weather.

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