

Green Mountain Farm-to-School
Programs to Connect Schools & Farms through Food & Agriculture

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For Immediate Release

| Sprouts Program Sends Out Shoots: Ten New School Gardens
 in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont

While the lingering cold weather might inspire you to load the woodstove instead of start tomato seedlings, Green Mountain Farm-to-School (GMFTS) is busy at work preparing for their newest expansion: ten new school gardens in the Northeast Kingdom! GMFTS, a nonprofit organization based in Newport, VT, has secured funding from 150 supporters and a \$20,000 challenge grant to build and maintain gardens at the following schools this spring: Albany, Barton, Brownington, Cambridge, Glover, Hyde Park, Irasburg, North Country Junior High School, Orleans and Waterville.

Starting in April, GMFTS will launch its Sprouts after-school program at the schools and teach its year-round comprehensive nutrition and agriculture curriculum. During the weekly class, students participate in hands-on activities in the classroom, kitchen and garden that promote healthy lifestyle choices. Throughout the summer, GMFTS educators lead workshops at the garden for students, parents and community members. This successful model was developed over the last three years at five schools in the North Country Supervisory Union. The addition of the ten new schools means hundreds more students will learn about sustainable agriculture and healthy food choices while growing organic produce for their school cafeterias.

“Our program has found that students are more likely to try new foods when they have participated in growing the foods themselves,” says Katherine Sims, GMFTS Executive Director “We hope that as we educate students, they will begin to educate their families and that will, in turn, begin to educate our communities.”

To support this growth GMFTS has brought on two new Nutrition and Agriculture Education staff to teach the after-school Sprouts curriculum:

- Susie Walsh Daloz of Montpelier comes to the job with extensive garden teaching and sustainable agriculture experience. She was most recently the Garden Manager and Teacher at the Edible Schoolyard in Berkeley, California. Before that she was the creator of and Garden Educator at a school garden in Concord, MA, a Farm Educator at Farm & Wilderness in Plymouth, VT and worked for three seasons at The Food Project in Lincoln, MA. Susie is delighted to be putting roots down in Vermont and taking part in the vibrant Farm-to-School movement here.

- Michael Rodriguez of Hardwick brings in-depth experience with Vermont local foods and an excitement to educate youth in food and farming. After supervising teenagers as the CSA Manager for The Food Project in Lincoln, MA, Michael moved to Vermont where he worked for two local farms. He was a Washhouse Crew Member at Pete's Greens in Craftsbury and an Assistant Affineur for the Cellars at Jasper Hill in Greensboro. Michael will continue to work with Jasper Hill and is eager to get back to educating youth while furthering his connections with the local food community.

The time is right for breaking ground and sowing the seeds of healthy eating in our schools. GMFTS invites the community to come visit its new garden sites and witness the transformation from grass lawn to vibrant, 1,200 square foot school garden. For more information about Green Mountain Farm-to-School and its programs visit www.GreenMountainFarmtoSchool.org