

# Healthy Foods FOR Healthy Kids



The First State school garden experts

The latest news and updates from Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids



HFHK Staff celebrate founder Dr. Thianda Manzara on October 9, 2021 at the "Farewell to Our Founder: A Farm Fest" event.  
Photo credit: HFHK staff

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## Closing out an extraordinary journey as founder

In spring of 2005, a class of 8th grade students harvested and ate their first salad in HFHK's pilot program at Springer Middle School. We've come a long way since then, with more than 35 HFHK garden schools serving thousands of Delaware students each year. All the while, our organization's mission has reflected my personal mission of giving children the opportunity to experience the joy of growing and eating garden-fresh vegetables (while learning science!). Have we succeeded? You be the judge! Here are just a few examples of what students have said over the years (their actual words, some punctuated for clarity):

"Radishes are my new favorite vegetable!" "The turnips are SO DELISH!" "The most awesome is when we harvested the lettuce. I can't wait to eat fresh lettuce at lunch." "I really enjoyed harvesting spinach. I am really happy that I am going to try spinach again. I have not had spinach in a long time." "This salad is good; we don't get salad at home" "I like all the veggies. They taste sweet, juicy and crunch." "I wanted to thank you for guiding us when we were harvesting the lettuce. It was super fun! I want to study biology when I grow up." "It was my first time gardening and I loved it."

(cont. on pg. 5)

## You've helped us raise over \$13,000 during the 2021 Giving Season

Because of you we surpassed our goal of raising \$13,000! This year's Giving Season was a success thanks to our many donors and supporters. Our theme was "Sunny Science Segments" where we featured clips from our new virtual lessons for each elementary grade level.

Starting with second grade's 'Sizing Up Soil' lesson, each of the six clips provides a sneak peak into our "Education Cultivation" program. From planting with kindergarten to composting with fifth grade, we hope you enjoyed following and maybe learned some science along the way!

Missed the posts or emails? All clips are available on our YouTube channel, Facebook and Instagram. Please give us a like and a share to help spread the word of all HFHK does within Delaware! Your continued support, whether financially or socially, is what makes our program possible. Thank you for all you do and for supporting us this 2021 Giving Season.

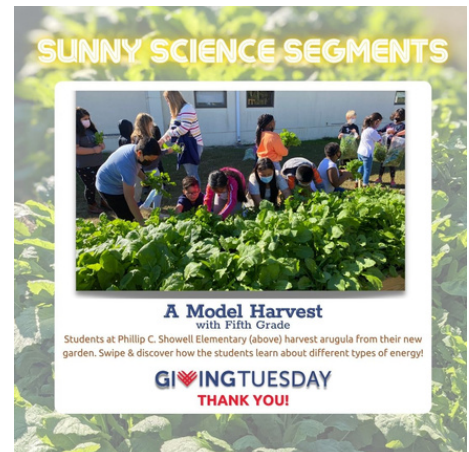


Photo credit: HFHK, Inc.

## HFHK welcomes Carrcroft Elementary School to our "Education Cultivation" program

On Saturday, November 6, HFHK staff, members of the PTA, teachers and Sprouts volunteers from both their Wilmington and Pasadena, MD stores built 8 garden beds at HFHK's newest partner school, Carrcroft Elementary. Their first growing season will start March 2022.

*MY HOPE IS THAT THIS GARDEN WILL BLOSSOM INTO A COMMUNITY GARDEN THAT CAN BE USED BY ALL OF CARRCROFT.*

– MARK OVERLY,  
PRINCIPAL



First grader, Max, separates trowels and cultivators.



Volunteers from Sprout gather to support the garden build.

Photo credit: HFHK, Inc.

Principal Mark Overly decided to partner with Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids because of positive feedback from other schools using the program. "We have heard how great the program is with giving hands-on experience when working with the Next Gen Science standards. Plus, who doesn't want to eat homegrown fresh lettuce?"

First grader Max (in photo above) impressed Overly and the garden volunteers by his contagious enthusiasm that kept the team going on the frosty morning. We never had a more capable tool organizer or back-up shoveler!

"It was wonderful how the community of builders came together for the build. Special thanks to the Sprout volunteers, parents, district office, and the HFHK workers that helped to make the planter boxes," said Overly.



Students at Hanby Elementary wash radishes from their first garden harvest.  
Photo credit: HFHK Staff

## Fall 2021 Program Update

### A recap of the season's successes

While not every school was able to have a fall growing season due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, 18 schools planted and harvested fall gardens. Collectively these school gardens grew approximately 2,000 pounds of produce this fall. At Hanby Elementary, a kindergarten student told us gardening is fun because "You get to eat the vegetables and you get to plant them." We look forward to more schools planting their gardens this spring!

Our partner schools are doing great things!

- Forwood donated almost 30 gallon sized bags of leafy greens to the Claymont Community Center Food Closet, feeding 75 families!
- McVey's ESL teacher has been engaging her students in the garden and supplementing language skills by creating a garden story board and timeline in her classroom!
- Springer's Nutrition staff went above and beyond in creating wonderful dishes for their students to enjoy using garden-fresh produce!
- Hanby and Phillip Showell completed their very first growing seasons with us!



Photo credit: (L) Brandywine School District  
(R) HFHK Staff

## Caught on video! NCC Executive Matt Meyer visits Springer

New Castle County Executive Matt Meyer visited Springer Middle School on a blustery day to witness firsthand the excitement and energy of 7th graders participating in their fall harvest. Meyer has expressed his strong support for HFHK over the years, including declaring Saturday, October 9, 2021 "Dr. Thianda Manzara Day" in New Castle County.

Mr. Meyer was especially impressed to learn the garden yielded approximately 456 lbs of produce during the spring of 2020, all of which were donated to the Claymont Community Center Food Closet and Forget Me Not Families. "In a time incredibly challenging for Dr. Woodson and the Springer family, they found a way to give back to the community," he noted.



NCC Executive Meyer and Springer Principal Dr. Tracey Woodson listen in on a garden lesson.  
Photo credit: HFHK Staff

HFHK Program Manager Jen Cipolla thanked Mr. Meyer for visiting. "Having support from all members of our community is how we bring awareness to this education and all the positive ripples it brings."

A video of Mr. Meyer's visit can be found on the Brandywine School District's YouTube channel linked [here](#).

## Are you our next board member?

### HFHK seeks new board members to support statewide expansion, program growth



#### Board Member Criteria

Are you passionate about our mission? Do you share our vision of a vegetable garden in every school in Delaware? Are you looking to take your community volunteering to the next level? Then a board position at Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids might be for you!

The HFHK board meets every other month for two hours, with committee meetings on off-months. Responsibilities include: attend board meetings and actively participate in at least one committee, play an active role in fundraising (supported by staff and board), get to know other members and contribute to shared decision-making, contribute financially to the organization in a personally meaningful way, and advocate for HFHK within your network and the community.

This is a two-year volunteer term.

If interested, please contact  
Executive Director, Lydia Sarson at  
[lsarson@healthyfoodsforhealthykids.org](mailto:lsarson@healthyfoodsforhealthykids.org)

## From the Executive Director: A new journey begins

Beginning with my first garden build at South Dover Elementary and participating in my first planting lesson at Sussex Montessori School, this year has been POWERFUL!

When I first joined Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids in February 2021, I thought I understood what I was undertaking. I had been an Executive Director before. I know what it is like to sit in a board room and prepare the quarterly financials for review. I have organized well over a hundred events and welcomed dignitaries from across the globe, but nothing prepared me for life-changing experience that is Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids.

I am blessed by the fact gardening has always been a part of my life. Growing up on a small farmette in Berks County, Pennsylvania, some of my first memories are of shelling peas with my mother, grandmother and sister, sitting on our porch swing and trying not to eat more than we saved. Beans from our garden were blanched and frozen for the winter and our tomatoes were turned to puree with the 1935 WearEver food mill my great grandfather sold door-to-door (which I still use today!) in between teaching at Kutztown Elementary School.

When COVID-19 hit and the world was forced upside down, my previous work in international economic development came to a screeching stand-still as airports shuttered and borders closed. The needs within our communities boiled to the very top and spilt over, forcing all of us to really see that which we had, at times, very comfortably ignored. Food lines stretching for miles, farmers dumping fresh milk, children facing depression on a scale never-before seen. It has affected all of us.

But as Audrey Hepburn is known to have said, "To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow," and no truer words are felt than when we begin working with the children across all our schools. The absolute JOY these students bring when they come to the garden is beautiful to witness and suddenly, you see hope spreading.



(Top) Lydia celebrates digging out 32 ft of landscape fabric from the old beds before the new garden was built at Brader Elementary.

(Bottom) Selfie time with the volunteers at Carrie Downie's garden re-build.



HFHK Public Ally Joe Jankowski mans the table where volunteers played "Veggie IQ" with the visitors.

Photo credit: HFHK Staff

## Franklin Fright with FMC Recap

Goblins and ghouls alike joined HFHK and sponsor FMC Corporation at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia for a frightfully fun time the weekends of October 23-24 and October 30-31.

Visitors enjoyed museum-wide trick-or-treating and Halloween-inspired live science shows such as, *That's Gross!*, *Pondering Plasma* and *Dr. Frankenstein's Pumpkin Lab*.

Volunteers greeted guests with fun trinkets such as travel lunch utensils, fake spiders, glow sticks and more! HFHK passed out over 1,000 seed packets to the trick-or-treaters and many games of "Veggie IQ" were played.

Thank you to FMC for providing the opportunity and to all the volunteers who donated their time.

*Do you know of an event that we should participate in? Send us an email at [info@healthyfoodsforhealthykids.org](mailto:info@healthyfoodsforhealthykids.org) and tell us more!*

## From the ED

(cont. from pg. 4)

One 5th grade student stated "Gardening is fun because you get a lot of exercise and you can see a lot of plants grow." A 4th grade student commented that he enjoyed having a garden because "you get to watch the process of the plants growing."

It's a reminder that often times, we adults lose our curiosity and we forget the value of living life with a learning mind. Spend some time with students in a garden, and you will no doubt be renewed with a goodness that only grows. Take it from me, it is transformative.

Looking forward to 2022, we are planning for new gardens at several schools in both New Castle and Sussex Counties as well as three garden rebuilds.

But program expansion is not our only goal. As we grow our reach, we also need to strengthen the organizational infrastructure to support new hires, diversify our revenue streams and increase our capacity building for continued sustainability.

If you are interested in joining this journey, inspiring healthier lives by providing youth with joyful school gardening experiences, come volunteer with us for a day. And if you like that, maybe you can play an even greater role by joining the board. Our work is just getting started. I hope to see you along the way.

- Lydia M. Sarson  
Executive Director, HFHK

## A Founder's Journey

(cont. from pg. 1)

Like the vegetables the children grow in their school gardens, HFHK started as a tiny seed and grew into a beautiful plant. Many, MANY people have nurtured HFHK along the way, giving it the sunlight, water, nutrients and air it needed to grow. I am deeply grateful to all of them, including farmers, chefs, school nutrition services leaders, school principals, teachers, students, HFHK Board of Directors and committee members, HFHK staff, especially Lindsay Lancaster, individual donors and institutional funders, and my friends and family. (I wish I could name you all, but that would take the entire newsletter!)

As I retire, I would like to think that our collective efforts have left Delaware a better place for children to grow and thrive, and that HFHK's progress towards that end will continue for many, many years to come.

- Thianda Manzara, PhD  
Founder, HFHK

To inspire healthier lives by providing youth with joyful gardening experiences and opportunities to eat the garden-fresh vegetables they've grown.