

Bartow County School System Receives Golden Radish Award for Farm to School Accomplishments

ATLANTA, October 24, 2016

Georgia's Departments of Agriculture, Public Health, Education and Georgia Organics came together under the prestigious Gold Dome for the annual Golden Radish Awards to celebrate incredible gains made in the farm to school movement. 53 school districts—nearly one-third of all public school districts in Georgia with a reach of over 1 million students—are now participating in farm to school programs and recognized through the Golden Radish Awards.

Bartow County School System was recognized with the Golden Radish Award at the Silver level for their accomplishments during the 2015-2016 school year, which include:

- Twelve of Bartow County's schools have school gardens used for a variety of activities. White Elementary School produced enough kale in their garden to have a kale chip taste test for all students. Cass Middle School students grew tomato plants and sold them as a fundraiser for their garden club.
- Tammy Brannen, of Southern Press and Packing in Blackshear, Georgia, visited students at Hamilton Crossing Elementary School on Earth Day to discuss growing blueberries on her 100 acre farm. Students planted their own blueberry bush to take home and enjoyed Georgia Grown Blueberry juice at lunch.
- Bartow County School Nutrition used a variety of methods to promote locally grown foods being served in their cafeterias. Locally grown items and cooking demonstrations were promoted 132 times using social media, school and cafeteria signage, featured recipes, and newspaper coverage several times during the year.

The Golden Radish Award publicly recognizes school districts for all aspects of farm to school, from local food procurement to hosting taste tests to gardening with students, and is awarded at Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Honorary Levels. Districts were evaluated on their work in ten different activities of farm to school.

“It is incredible to see the growth of farm to school programs in the last few years,” stated Alice Rolls, Georgia Organics Executive Director. “Every day, children across our state are getting the opportunity to grow and taste Georgia food in school. I'm excited to see Georgia's schools invest in Georgia farmers and in our children at the same time.”

Districts of all sizes are utilizing farm to school programs to teach academic standards in school gardens, support the local economy through local food purchases for school meals, and fight childhood obesity and other preventable food-related diseases.

“Our ultimate goal here at the department is for communities to take ownership of their school cafeterias, similarly to how we all push for excellence in the classroom, the arts, and athletics,” said Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Gary W. Black. “We are proud to have so many Georgia Grown Feed My School participants recognized here today and are excited as to what current and future Golden Radish Award winners will accomplish as we work toward our 2020 Vision for School Nutrition in Georgia.”

State Superintendent Richard Woods agreed with Commissioner Black, emphasizing the benefits of connecting education to Georgia’s largest industry. “Having access to fresh, farm to school meals is great for Georgia’s students,” said Woods. “Farm to school programs also connect students with agriculture, which is an enormously important industry for our state. We appreciate the Golden Radish Award because it recognizes those school districts that are striving every day to provide more farm to school meals.”

To top it off, Brenda Fitzgerald, M.D., commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health, noted the combined educational and long-term health benefits of farm to school. “Farm to school teaches our children the importance of food that helps bodies grow healthy and strong and food that promotes learning,” said Fitzgerald. “When children learn as early as possible where their food comes from, they are more likely to eat fresh, nutritious foods that will sustain healthy choices that spread to families and communities.”

During the 2015-2016 school year, school districts collectively:

- Served 39 million school meals that included local food
- Held 8,246 taste tests of fresh, local food to students
- Taught 3,406 garden, food and nutrition lessons to students
- Tended 575 edible school gardens
- Hosted 1,935 hands-on cooking activities with students
- Incorporated farm to school into 390 staff professional development opportunities
- Championed and sustained district-wide policies or procedures into 29 schools districts

Needless to say, the 2015-16 school year was a banner year for farm to school in Georgia, and all participants were thrilled to celebrate at the Golden Radish Awards.

The 53 school systems being recognized are:

Gold Level

Atlanta Public Schools

Barrow County School System

Bibb County School District

Bleckley County School District

Burke County Public School System

Carrollton City Schools

Cherokee County School District
City Schools of Decatur
Clarke County School District
Dougherty County School System
Elbert County School District
Fannin County School System
Fulton County Schools
Gwinnett County Public Schools
Habersham County Schools
Jackson County Schools
Laurens County Schools
Sumter County Schools
Tift County Schools

Silver Level

Bartow County School System
Cobb County School District
Effingham County Schools
Fayette County Public Schools
Forsyth County Schools
Hart County Schools
Newton County Schools
Rabun County Schools
Savannah-Chatham County Public School System
Treutlen County Schools

Bronze Level

Brantley County School District
Commerce City Schools
Dade County Schools
DeKalb County School District
Gainesville City School System
Madison County School District
Marietta City Schools
Paulding County School District
Warren County Public Schools
Toombs County Schools

Honorary Level

Buford City Schools

Cartersville City School District

Coffee County School System

Columbia County School District

Crisp County School System

Dalton Public Schools

Franklin County Schools

Hall County Schools

Henry County Schools

Lee County School District

Morgan County Charter School System

Muscogee County School District

Ware County Schools

Worth County Schools

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