

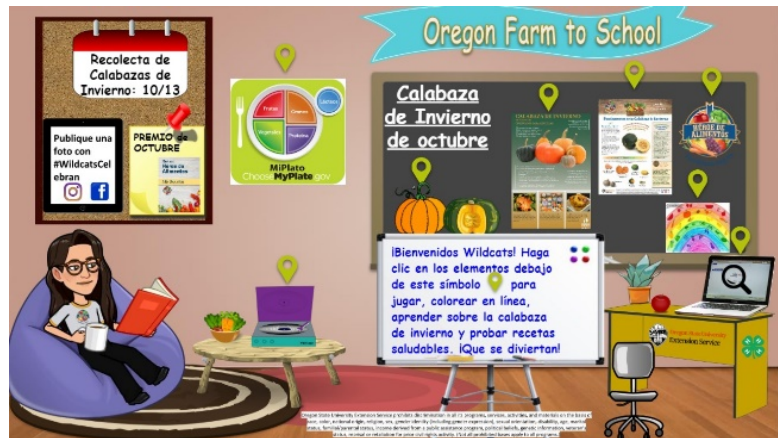


Oregon State University Extension Service Marion County

Farm to School Education in Marion County

Sarah Contreras, OSU Extension, Education Program Assistant

The Marion County Oregon Farm to School Project is delivered through the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) and 4-H Youth Development programs based at OSU Extension Service in Marion County, and reaching students and their families at Four Corners Elementary in Salem, Kennedy Elementary in Keizer, and Santiam Elementary in Mill City.



Although this academic school year is running much differently from previous years, our program continues to adapt; focusing on the needs of our students and their families by developing and providing opportunities through hands-on learning of nutrition, gardening, and cultivating knowledge and excitement around fruits and vegetables through web-based and take-home deliverables.

Starting a new job in the midst of a pandemic could easily result in difficulties and struggles, but after six months of settling into my Education Program Assistant position, my takeaway of our program and community is, in one word: resilient. With continuous collaboration and support, this team of program assistants and coordinators, teachers, school and kitchen staff, have transformed each hurdle into new and bright opportunities.



Sarah Contreras greeting students in Virtual Garden Club

A glimpse into our 2020 programming:

Oregon Farm to School Virtual Garden Club (June to September): Sarah Contreras and Yolanda Rodriguez recorded, edited, and delivered weekly videos and held live check-in

meetings that were available in English and Spanish. Virtual Garden Club topics included growing plants from seeds and starts, nutrition content, identifying plant parts, recipe demonstrations, as well as planning and creating a new garden.

October, 2020 to June, 2021: Each month we will highlight an Oregon-grown food for students and their families to discover. With access to monthly interactive English and Spanish Bitmoji classrooms, the students have an opportunity to engage with games, resources, and information relating to the featured produce item of the month.



With the healthy celebration Bitmoji classrooms and efforts to maintain hands-on learning, we have joined with a local farm to provide partner schools with the featured produce item, and are encouraging students and their families to try and cook with their fresh, local produce. Along with their fresh produce item, students also receive a take-home healthy celebration packet filled with activity pages and recipes related to the featured produce item.

After months of learning and meeting via Google Classroom for Virtual Garden Club over the summer, Oregon Farm to School EPA Sarah Contreras and Santiam Elementary student, Isabela “Izzy” celebrated meeting in-person at the Healthy October Celebration in Mill City with Winter Squash.

No yearly field trip? No problem! We’re bringing the farm to students! Our first virtual farm field trip spotlights Lucky Crow Farm in Monmouth, offering students and their families a chance to fully experience how a small farm operates, where their food comes from, the growing process, how those whole foods are harvested and, concludes with how produce is delivered to communities!



Our very own summer Virtual Garden Club member, Malillany (Four Corners), participated in the Virtual Farm Field Trip by asking Farmer Eden (left) interview questions, having the opportunity to share what it takes to grow and harvest beets in Oregon!

Throughout November, Oregon Farm to School teamed up with the Master Food Preservers to hold the Put-It-Up Preservation Series for families, a 3-week bilingual Zoom series combining local Oregon fresh produce, science-based preservation research and activities, nutrition and fun!

“We learned how easy it can be to preserve food.” -Krystyn

“I liked the information about the foods [pears, beets, onions, and broccoli] we were using each class. I even learned more about them! I wish we could be in-person! But this was the next best thing!”

- Jordan and Parker



With an uncertain future ahead of us, our top priority remains with students and their families by continuing to adapt our programming in order to provide healthy opportunities and sustainable learning.

The Extension Farm to School Program is funded by a grant from the Oregon Department of Education. Visit their Farm to School Program website at <http://www.farmtoschool.org/our-network/Oregon>.

Additional Resources:

USDA SNAP-Ed in Marion County -

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/marion/extension-family-community-health>

4-H Youth Development programs in Marion County -

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/4h/marion>

Lucky Crow Farm - <https://www.luckycrowfarm.com/>