

Six Awards Presented for 2019 Spring Green Schools Grant Program

ALBANY – Six New York state schools were recipients in the spring round of Green Schools Grants. NYSAR³ established this grant program for Grades K-12 in 2005 for the purpose of providing up to \$500 for seed, or start-up money for recycling/waste reduction/composting programs in public and private schools. Since that time, over 100 NYS schools have benefitted from the program. Spring 2019 awards, presented on Earth Day, went to:

Finger Lakes Technical and Career Center - The \$498 award to Finger Lakes Technical and Career Center (FLTCC) will fund the purchase of several vermicompost bins, their associated equipment, and a bin to collect and hold food scraps, all to accommodate the amount of compostable material generated by the Culinary Program at FLTCC. The Culinary Program and Farm to Table Sustainable Agriculture Academy (F2T SAA), another part of FLTCC, will continue to work together to keep food waste out of their local landfill by introducing vermicomposting into their curriculum and tying it with other state education requirements. In addition, the worms' castings and tea will be used in fertilizing FLTCC's landscape.

Furthermore, FLTCC's partnership with Vermigreen, a local business, will ensure its success through consultation and supply of initial worms. Students will maintain the vermicompost bins in their greenhouse for a stable temperature while school is in session, and an instructor will tend to them at an offsite location during the summer. FLTCC hopes the Vermiculture Center will become a centerpiece within the F2T SAA program.

Jesse T. Zoller Elementary School, Schenectady - The \$500 award to Jesse T. Zoller Elementary School will be used to purchase a half dozen compost and vermicompost (worm compost) bins, as well as supplemental educational materials. Over the past several years, the school has been implementing environmental sustainability practices including gardening vegetables, fruits, herbs, and plants, recycling paper and redeemable bottle and cans, and composting some of their yard's grass and leaves, but wants to do more. With these funds, Zoller will be able to divert more of their school ground trimmings and meal program's food scraps to compost.

As the school aims to "close the loop" in the coming years, their goals are to develop school-wide composting and recycling systems, sell the generated worm castings as an annual fundraiser to further expand their programs, and use the remaining compost in their gardens to grow food for students and staff. Backed by the school's administration, a number of staff and the PTO, along with support from local organizations ensure the continued success of Zoller's programs.

French Road Elementary School, Rochester - The \$228 award to French Road Elementary School will fund the physical supplies needed to implement a "Backyard Vermicomposting" workshop. Organics collected from the cafeteria will be hauled to local farms and vermicomposted, and the workshop will give students a background on the basics and hands-on experience with worm composting. It will be tied in with existing science curriculum and include a component to encourage students to begin composting efforts at home. The supplies will be reused for continued education in coming years. Impact Earth, a partner in BCSD's environmental goals, has also pledged to provide staffing at the workshops and maintain the worm bins in the future.

The project will help the school meet the zero waste policy established in 2017 by the Brighton Central School Board, with a goal of reaching an 80% landfill diversion rate by 2022.

Lake Placid Central School District, Lake Placid - LPCSD will use its \$500 award towards the cost of retrofitting a shipping container to house a high flow drum composter arriving this summer as part of a grant from North Country School Camp Treetops (NCT), the result of a grant from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). The district hopes to replicate the success of NCT's pilot composting project started in 2016 by processing its food waste along with residents' and a local deli.

Multiple partnerships from design of the original composter and determining a location, to support from LPCSD and the local community and meeting all requirements, have helped the project succeed to this point. These and LPCSD's previous experience utilizing NCT's composting operation and research and development of a business model for the system ensure the program will be sustainable. Students will be involved in its operation by offering composting services, maintaining it daily with a goal of supplying and tracking 150-200 pounds of food waste per day each year, and selling finished compost. In addition, it is possible the program could be used as a tool for students to earn credits towards graduation.

Hermon DeKalb Central School in De Kalb Junction - Hermon DeKalb's \$500 award will be used to supplement the out of pocket cost needed to retrofit a shipping container to hold the high flow drum composter they will receive this summer from a North Country School Camp Treetops (NCT) grant as a result of a grant from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). HD seeks to replicate NCT's pilot composter project by processing food waste generated by the school, SUNY Canton, and two local restaurants, as well as sawdust from Amish sawmills.

To further this project's impact, the school district plans to integrate it into their culture and curriculum. HD's multiple partnerships including NCT and the Adirondack North Country Association have made this project successful thus far and their continued support will ensure its long-term sustainability.

McGraw Junior/Senior High School, McGraw - McGraw's \$500 award will purchase materials needed to build a composting bin to start a composting program for its 6th-12th grade students, and a Terracycle bin to collect snack wrapper packaging. The school aims to set an example by reducing their waste.

Led by the high school's environmental club members and advisor, the program's creation has been guided with expertise from Syracuse University's Center for Sustainable Community Solutions, the school's head of maintenance and its shop teacher on the system to best fit its needs and how to implement it. Furthermore, the school district is working to offer agricultural courses to its high school students, and teachers see the potential in incorporating the composting program into the curriculum. The club will conduct a food audit and measure the food composted to better track results.

"We had a nice mix of interesting applications submitted from schools across New York state this round, with a total of \$2,726 going to the six winners," said Theresa Evans, former chair of the NYSAR³ Green Schools grant program. "We had 26 applications this year. It was a record number of submissions, but made the selection process very difficult."