

WHIDBEY ISLAND NOURISHES



June 2021

Feeding South Whidbey youth for 14 years



A Growing Love of Vegetables

"It's a myth that students don't like vegetables." says Farm Manager, Cary Peterson, "They adore fresh-picked veggies - they go crazy for them!"

The children in the South Whidbey School District know all about fresh, organic veggies - they grow them as part of their collaborating school curriculum with the South Whidbey School Farms Program. The Farm was started in 2014 by Cary Peterson, who had previously worked with the Good Cheer Food Bank to create their garden. "Farmer Cary," as the students know her, saw the empty space behind the Elementary School's South Campus as an opportunity to grow fresh vegetables for the school lunch program. Partnerships with the Goosefoot

Community Fund, Whidbey Island Nourishes, Good Cheer Food Bank, and the Whidbey Institute helped "grow" the program.

The School Farm program is now a specialist garden science class taught to K-6 students at the SW Elementary School, incorporating organic growing practices with a garden-based curriculum linked to Common Core and Next Generation Science standards. **Students at the Farm learn about its ecosystem - the soil composition, seed development, and the living organisms that support it, while also digging, planting, and harvesting. It's a full, hands-on experience.**

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A Message from Pam LeLoup, WIN Board President

Dear Friends of WIN -

Oh, my goodness, what a year this has been for all of us! Life has been filled with changes at home, at work, and definitely at WIN. From adopting increased sanitizing procedures, physical distancing in the WIN kitchen, and wearing masks to increasing the amount of healthy food provided to our clients, **our volunteers and staff have provided uninterrupted service.**

Once in a while, during times of crisis, a spectacular opportunity can appear. That is precisely what happened for WIN and our community partners at Good Cheer, Readiness to Learn, and the South Whidbey School Farms. **Nothing has been more critical to this team of organizations than ensuring that our community's children have the nutrition they need.** Their leaders sought out solutions to help improve the lives of those in our community, focusing on the areas where they could bring the greatest value.

Through it all, we have been overwhelmed by the unquestionable strength and character of our neighbors. How fortunate we are to be part of this strong community that supports each other to accomplish great things! The outpouring of support we have received - messages of gratitude, words of encouragement, and acts of generosity have served as powerful affirmations of the work that we do.

It is the power of this community that propels us forward to better times.



Volunteers loading up for home delivery

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Mission

Whidbey Island Nourishes (WIN) is a volunteer-powered, nonprofit organization dedicated to nourishing youth on South Whidbey Island.



Volunteers in the WIN Kitchen

A Growing Love of Vegetables

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At the end of each class comes "garden nibbles," an opportunity to snack on freshly picked vegetables. **Students eagerly sample whatever is in season, kale, peas, broccoli, tomatoes, and everyone's favorite - carrots!**

From the beginning, students were enthusiastic about eating fresh vegetables at the Farm, but were often hesitant to eat those same vegetables, the ones they grew and harvested, served in the cafeteria. The program "grew" again, and cooking opportunities and culinary classes were introduced to keep students connected to the food they were growing. Fifth and sixth-grade students get to try their hand at making simple dishes that highlight the food from the Farm, while younger students help prepare food for school events like the November Harvest Feast and Earth Day.



We are happy to report that most of our South Whidbey Elementary School students returned to in-person learning at the School Farm this spring. The Farm plans to continue its increased production level to help feed food-insecure students and their families. And WIN continues to distribute school farm-grown produce to families in need.

Growing and eating fresh food can almost seem magical when seen through the eyes of the students. Pulling fresh carrots out of the soil never ceases to delight, munching on a kale leaf filled with flowers, ground cherries, and perhaps some cucumbers to make a garden taco becomes the most delicious treat. Eating fresh, garden-grown vegetables with flavors that astound transforms a child's relationship with food. **Our world is often disconnected from nature. Hands-on collaborative learning and eating at the Farm create connections** between the children's brains, hearts, and bellies.

Even though this past year was challenging learning from home, many students continued to learn and eat with the Farm throughout the shutdown - through educational videos, online garden science and culinary classes, and thousands of vegetable starts made available for student farmers to grow at home. And, with students not at the Farm to eat garden nibbles, more vegetables were able to be used by the cafeteria for home-delivered school lunches and by Whidbey Island Nourishes in their Weekend Meal and Snack Programs.



What Does WIN Do?

Weekend and Summer Meal Programs

For children who rely on the free or reduced cost lunch program during the school year or those in need of supplemental nutrition, our Weekend and Summer Meal Programs provide enrolled children enough healthy food for two meals, to be consumed over the weekend or when school is not in session. Food is prepared and delivered directly to homes by volunteers.

Community Nutrition Support

To help ensure that no child goes hungry, WIN provides nutritional support to community organizations offering assistance and programming for young people.

Snack Program

To help elementary school students reach the recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables, WIN's snack program, in partnership with the South Whidbey School Farms Program and AmeriCorps, provides fresh fruit and vegetable snacks to all students at the South Whidbey Elementary School.



We're Making a Cookbook!

We're collecting recipes for young eaters (and others) that will be used next school year to enhance students' nutrition and culinary education and help create better relationships with locally grown food.

Help us make something delicious!

SNACKING THROUGH THE SEASONS A WHIDBEY ISLAND COOKBOOK

A collection of simple and delicious snack recipes that encourage students and others to enjoy eating locally with the seasons

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Do you have a snack or easy meal recipe that:

- Uses local ingredients?
- Can be adapted for a range of culinary skill levels?
- Is equitable in its ingredients (can be cooked in households of varying economic situations)
- Offers diverse or cultural flavors

Email snackingthroughtheseasons@gmail.com for more information on how to submit your recipe

A collaborative project from Whidbey Island Nourishes, the South Whidbey School Farms Program, Good Cheer Food Bank, Coupeville Farm to School Program and Whidbey Island Grown

Snacking Away

As students returned to in-person learning this year, Whidbey Island Nourishes and AmeriCorps were there to help with the transition by providing every student with the option of a nutritious snack.

Studies show that around 85 percent of youth in our country are not receiving the recommended daily value of fruits and vegetables. The Snack Program at Whidbey Island Nourishes was developed to encourage young people in our community to eat their daily share of fruits and vegetables. In partnership with South Whidbey School Farms, WIN has been able to bring students fresh, farm-grown carrots. Students have shown enthusiasm towards the carrots, taking pride in the fact that they participated in the growing process. WIN is looking forward to all the farm-grown produce students will get to eat through-out the school year.

In addition to carrots, students also enjoyed clementines, snap peas, apples, bananas, grapes, and an occasional special treat like berries or yogurt-covered frozen bananas. Snack time has also provided an opportunity for students to get outside, taking a break from the classroom to eat and chat with their peers in a safe, socially distant setting. It is clear that students need community now more than ever; it has been a fun additional benefit of the Snack Program.

With the help of South Whidbey Elementary School and its teachers, the Snack Program has seen increased participation over the months, as more and more students choose to enjoy the healthy snack provided. Watching students interact with their peers while practicing their orange peeling skills has been a day brightener.



AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps has played a big part at WIN this past year. As part of AmeriCorps' Healthy Futures Program, WIN and the South Whidbey School Farms Program hosted a team of AmeriCorps Members who spent the school year teaching students how to grow vegetables at the School Farm, how to cook those vegetables and make something yummy, and the benefits of eating what they've grown and cooked.



Thank You Bagel Factory!

John Auburn, the owner of the Bagel Factory in Clinton and Oak Harbor, is part of the community of generous donors to WIN. Daily he provides us with day-old bagels for distribution in WIN's meals.

"Having lived through tough times myself fuels my generosity to the community now," said Auburn.

Auburn bought the Clinton bagel shop in 2015. He had been baking artisan cakes since 2000 as the owner of JW Desserts when the bagel shop became available.

A "hands-on" guy, Auburn did much of the remodeling needed on his own.

"People scoffed when I put in the large garage door window in the bagel shop, but since the pandemic, that roll-up window has been a lifesaver," said Auburn.

Throughout the pandemic, he has served customers with take-out bagels through the roll-up window, which was retrofitted with plastic shields between customers and staff.

"I feel like a real part of the community since I bought the bagel shop," said Auburn. "I love interacting with the customers, and we have so many regulars. I have high standards for quality and customer service. The community actually owns this bagel shop, not me."



The Bagel Factory's John Auburn



Auburn began donating his day-old bagels to WIN shortly after he opened the Clinton shop. "I have a real soft spot for kids and the elderly," said Auburn. "I didn't want to sell the day-olds. I'd rather see them going to people who need the nourishment."

Auburn has a goal of having up to seven bagel shops. Currently, he is hard at work getting ready to open a third store in Mt. Vernon.

"My goal is to eventually sell these stores to the employees. Then I'd like to mentor young people teaching them skills like carpentry," said Auburn. **"I like doing more than my share of good to combat the evil in the world."** Helping feed families certainly accomplishes that.

WIN Volunteers

While life was complicated for many during COVID, WIN volunteers helped make feeding children and teens look so easy! Spending time in the WIN kitchen was the only "social" time for most of our volunteers. When asked how WIN fit into their lives this past year, the volunteers mostly had the very same things to say - because we reduced the number of volunteers in the kitchen to safely distance while working (masked and gloved, of course), it became a haven for catching up and sharing stories. There was plenty of time to chat while food was prepped and bags were filled for WIN's clients.



One important aspect of living on Whidbey Island is our loving community; someone sees a need and fills it. Every time I come in to volunteer at WIN, whatever the task assigned to me, I do it cheerfully in gratitude for the opportunity to serve my community. In addition, we laugh a lot. None of that changed during this year of COVID.

- Susan Bennett

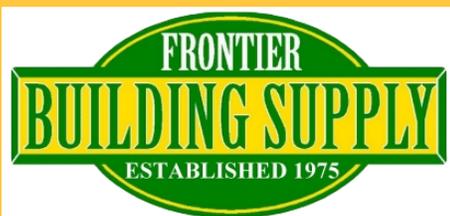
Over the years I have volunteered for WIN, I have often experienced the need for change to make our services better for the children we serve. Of course, Covid has been the ultimate challenge so far. How will we feed children during this time when it's needed most? It gives my heart joy to be part of a group that rallies around an issue and finds a solution in the name of love.

- Trisha Brigham

From the first shift I worked in the WIN kitchen about three years ago, I have been amazed by the efficiency of the operation and the camaraderie between the volunteers and staff. Since that first shift, mornings spent volunteering at WIN are my favorite part of the week. I am so impressed that WIN leadership found a way to continue providing services to families in our community following the COVID outbreak and the safety measures that were put in place to protect volunteers. The spirit of "All hands on deck, let's do whatever needs to get done" is still going strong. WIN mornings are still my favorite day of each week, and it's so rewarding to know that the work is providing such a benefit to the community.

- Gayle Shea

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YOU CAN HELP!

Your support nourishes the most vulnerable members of our community. With your help, we can continue to give young people the nutrition they need to grow to their full potential

Make a Contribution

Use the attached donation envelope or make a contribution online at whidbeyislandnourishes.org

Become a Monthly Donor

Giving monthly helps provide a steady source of funds that allows WIN to respond immediately when needs arise

Host a Fundraiser

Use a birthday or anniversary to raise money for WIN and help educate others about food insecurity and its impact on young people



whidbeyislandnourishes.org