

Learning to Grow

From greenhouse to cafeteria: Houghton middle-schoolers to grow their own food

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By GARRETT NEESE (gneese@mininggazette.com) The Daily Mining Gazette

HOUGHTON - The new greenhouse at Houghton Middle School has its first plants.

Local 4-H Club students spent Thursday afternoon planting between 500 to 600 starts for crops such as zucchini, squash and pumpkin and watering them before moving them into the new facility.

This is the first spring for the complex, which also includes a vegetable garden and a pollinator garden.



Garrett Neese/Daily Mining Gazette

Sarah Geborkoff, 4-H leader and Houghton Middle School science teacher, talks to 4-H members after the group prepared starts of cucumbers, zucchini and other vegetables for the school's new greenhouse Thursday afternoon.

"We have older kids helping and leading the younger kids within 4-H," said 4-H leader and Houghton Middle School teacher Sarah Geborkoff. "I think when the kids realize that what they're doing is going to benefit students in the whole district and that they're helping to make food for themselves and their friends, it gives them a sense of ownership and they realize that even young people can make a difference in their community. We're showing them how to be leaders at every step along the way. And they learned that community service can be fun, also."

Funding came from the Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative and Portage Health Foundation. The greenhouse and garden will also see use from middle school and high school LSSI teams, AP biology class, the high school Ecology Club and community members.

Some of the vegetables being grown will show up on students' lunch trays later this year.

"The summer (Great Exploration) kids that are here every day, we're going to have weekly deliveries to them once we do have some food available, and in the fall, we'll plant some some additional fall crops, but everything else - the squash, and the tomatoes that are ripe - will be used by our school food program," said Geborkoff.

Some seeds are also going to the 4-H's first plant sale, which will be held June 8 and 9 at Houghton Middle School. Cucumbers, pumpkins, squash, and zucchini starts as well as some potted cherry tomatoes will be available to purchase. Proceeds will go towards greenhouse activity as well as the Houghton County 4-H.

Jaden Serafin, a sixth-grader and Houghton Middle School, and Chloe Serafin, a third-grader at Houghton Elementary School, had both planted flowers at the school before for 4-H. But that involved planting pre-grown flowers rather than seeing plants grow, Jaden said.

"It seems nice," Jaden said. "We know where it comes from. We know that it's not a GMO or something."

Donors included Sleeman's, Valley View Quarry, Superior Block, Erickson's Feed & Seed and local families.

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