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School Garden Kicks Off With May 1 Work Party

By Kat Darling
Two Mountain Farm
and former AE/MS student

I'd like to share with you an exciting project I've been working on: a School Garden at AE/MS, where vegetables and flowers can be grown, learned from, appreciated, and eaten by students, teachers, and the whole community!

The garden will be installed right in front of the school, on the lawn area where the flagpole, peace-pole and granite bench currently are. It will be composed of a series of raised beds (some put in this year, others next year), with lawn between the beds. A knee-high, decorative fence will run part way along the walkway, creating an aesthetic border between the high-traffic zone and the garden space.

Benefits of having a school garden are almost limitless. Many schools already have gardens, and the outcomes are clear. At its best, the garden can be a

place for kids to do hands-on learning, to become inspired to grow their own healthy food, and to share their knowledge and creativity with one another. From science classes on seed germination to art projects like stepping-stone painting, the garden can be integrated into curriculum to enhance hands-on learning and to develop students' sense of ownership and stewardship for their surroundings.

Other ideas include joint 1st-and-8th grade legacy projects, supplementing the school's salad bar with what's grown in the garden, hosting a pumpkin-growing contest between schools, or having students sell the produce at a local farmers' market. What other ideas do you have?

We're receiving great support from community members, including all those who donated at Town Meeting, and businesses such as Bluewater Farm,
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Second grade students send marbles racing down the long and difficult raceway they have assembled. On stage (l-r): Shaelyn Hanlon, Brianna Tilton, Hannah Asbury, Riley Keezer, Jacob Duquette. On the floor: Ethan Davis, Chase Keyser, Caleb Chevarie, Madisyn Brayshaw, Madalyn Goodwin, Ronan Walsh. Photo: Gretchen Hildebrand



(L-r) Stephanie Nelson presents a large donation from her senior project to Heidi Roy, associate manager of the New Hampshire Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Helping Stephanie are her friends, Emily Estep and Kelsey Silver. Staff photo: Becca Lance

Senior Projects Aim To Benefit The Community

By Becca Lance
Beacon volunteer and MVHS '11

With the school year coming to a close, the seniors at Merrimack Valley High School are getting ready to graduate. But earning just the 26 required credits and 24 hours of community service will not get them a diploma – seniors at MVHS are also required to complete a senior project.

This project entails three aspects: a paper, product, and presentation. The product must include a time commitment of at least 30 hours, and the overall project is supposed to be a learning experience. Many seniors choose projects that benefit the community, just as Stephanie Nelson and Ryan Davis, both Andover residents, each did.

Fighting MS

For her senior project, Stephanie Nelson held a walk to raise money for Multiple Sclerosis, or MS. This is a chronic, often disabling disease that attacks the central nervous system. Stephanie's mother was diagnosed with MS about six years ago, and that's how Stephanie

got the idea.

The four and a half mile walk was held on April 17 at Merrimack Valley High School. The day turned out to be rainy and cold, so only half of the expected number of walkers came.

There was also a multi-item raffle and t-shirts for sale. One hundred percent of the proceeds went to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society – with the donations, sponsors, and profits from the raffle and shirts, Stephanie raised a total of \$3,561.50. She presented the check to Heidi Roy, the Associate Manager of the National MS Society's New Hampshire Chapter, on April 22 at MVHS.

Building Community

For his senior project, Ryan Davis created a social networking site – MVSocial.net – exclusively for the Merrimack Valley community. He got the idea when he noticed the rising popularity of other social networking sites, such as MySpace and Facebook, so he decided to use the Internet as a way to inform

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Clockwise from front left: Tyler Champagne, Lindsey Stiles, Maddie Vaine, Sasha Mackenzie, Lilly Carlson, and Megan Stiles paint flower pots to sell at the Spring Concert at AE/MS on Thursday, May 6. The flower pot sale is a fundraiser for the Andover Afterschool Program. For more about the Spring Concert, see page 46. Photo: Amanda Vaine