TrashMasters!™
Team Up to Clean Up

High School Division
Brooklyn Borough
& Citywide Winner

HS for Public Service:
Heroes of Tomorrow

2012 GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS

This certificate is awarded with the sincere appreciation and esteem
of a grateful Department and City in recognition of your school's efforts to help make New York City shine.

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Department of Sanitation
Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling
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recycle more,
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2012 Golden Apple Awards
Contest Entry Judging Info

(This sheet prepared for judges' use by DSNY BWPRR)

ID Info: 12006

School: HS for Public Service: Heroes of Tomorrow

Grade Division HS

Borough: K

☑ **Golden Shovel Award contestant**
(for borough Master School Composter)

School Population: total # 407

2012 Project Entries received for:

		Core Group:	Total Participating:
☐ **TrashMasters! Super Recyclers**	Received:		
☐ **TrashMasters! Reduce & Reuse Challenge**	Received:		
☑ **TrashMasters! Team Up to Clean Up**	Received: 5/1/2012	50	340

Motivating Teens: Food Activists through Urban Agriculture

Motivating Teens to Become Local Food Activists through Urban Agriculture: The Youth Farm is a unique partnership between the High School for Public Service and Green Guerillas. It is a 1.2 acre working farm that engages students, teachers, parents, and Crown Heights residents in a range of activities that connect them to the earth, help them eat better, and help them learn about food, farming, and nutrition. Our weekly farmers market (June thru Oct) sells a delicious selection of fruits and vegetables at reasonable prices grown right here in Crown Heights! Students are engaged in after school Farm Club, internships, advocacy groups, volunteer days, and summer jobs. Teachers and local farmers co-create curriculum using the farm as an outdoor classroom. The Youth Farm has become a local hub for community organizing around issues of food access, environmental stewardship, and health.

Prior Year Entries:

first entry

School Contact Information:

Phone: 718-756-5325
Address: 600 Kingston Ave
Brooklyn 11203

Block&Lot: 3048110001
DOE Location: K546
DOE Bldg: K470

REQUIRED for Super Recyclers only:

Custodian: KEVIN MILLER
Custodian's Phone: 718-221-5543
Custodian's Email: ck470@schools.nyc.gov

Sustainability Coord:

Contest Coordinator: Ben Shuldiner
Coord Phone (if different):
Coordinator Email: bshuldi@schools.nyc.gov

Principal: Ben Shuldiner
Principal Email: bshuldi@schools.nyc.gov

Comments (may not be relevant to judging)

Principal serving as Contest Coordinator. Submitted by: Stacey Murphy, After School Program Staff, Green Guerillas Farm Consultant. 734-646-2289 stacey@bkfarmyards.com. GEORGE W. WINGATE HS CAMPUS (4 schools).

Info Confirmed:

6/6/2012

Motivating Teens to Become Local Food Activists through Urban Agriculture

DUE TUESDAY MAY 1ST

SCHOOL INFO

High School for Public Service (HSPS)
600 Kingston Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11203
P: 718-756-5325
F: 718-363-3206

Principal: Ben Shuldiner, 718-756-5325, bshuldi@schools.nyc.gov
Contest Coordinator: Stacey Murphy, Youth Farmer Coordinator, 734-646-2289, stacey@bkfarmyards.com

School description

The High School for Public Service pursues a mission of service through an academic and volunteer based community service program. Students take academic classes in social action, human rights, field research in public policy, and citizenship and participation. Students are encouraged to participate in volunteer work through service learning projects and after school-based opportunities including growing food for the community. To date, students at the High School for Public Service have served over 250,000 hours of volunteer work in the New York City community. The High School for Public Service currently has 407 students enrolled. It is a Title 1 school in the East Flatbush / Crown Heights neighborhood. The school community matches the surrounding neighborhood demographics with 86% African American (about half of which are Caribbean-American), 13% Latino, and 1% Asian-American.

CONTEST ENTRY INFO

Borough: Brooklyn
Grade Division: High School
Contest Entry Title: Nourishing the Community: *Motivating Teens to Become Local Food Advocates through Urban Agriculture*
Contest Entry Summary:

The Youth Farm is a unique partnership between the High School for Public Service and Green Guerillas. It is a 1.2 acre working farm that engages students, teachers, parents, and Crown Heights residents in a range of activities that connect them to the earth, help them eat better, and help them learn about food, farming, and nutrition. Our weekly farmers market (June thru Oct) sells a delicious selection of fruits and vegetables at reasonable prices grown right here in Crown Heights! Students are engaged in after school Farm Club, internships, advocacy groups, volunteer days, and summer jobs. Teachers and local farmers co-create curriculum using the farm as an outdoor classroom. The Youth Farm has become a local hub for community organizing around issues of food access, environmental stewardship, and health.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Student Participation: Core Group # 50
Student Participation: Total # 340
School Population: Total # 407

1.0 IMPLEMENTATION

WHY FARM?

The students at HSPS have recognized a health issue affecting their community and they are working with grassroots local organizations to assess local resources and make a change. Living in an underserved community presents a series of inter-related long-term issues for our teens to navigate. High unemployment rates and little access to fresh food put this population at a high risk for costly, chronic health issues such as diabetes, obesity, and heart disease. Because the Caribbean-American population has agricultural roots, the teens not only want to reconnect with the land here in Brooklyn, but they also want to grow culturally significant crops so the community can carry on family traditions.

The current environment makes eating a healthy diet difficult. The community is part of an area defined by the NYC Department of Health as high on the Supermarket Need Index, indicating an area with less access to fresh food, and higher rates of obesity and diet-related disease. The teens at the High School for Public Service are leading the way, becoming fresh food advocates and ambassadors who recruit more friends to get involved in farm activities, lead social media campaigns, and work with grass-roots organizations to grow fresh, affordable food for the community.

WHAT WE DID

In March 2010, we broke ground on the 1-acre farm on our front lawn: at the time, it was primarily sod and weeds with 7 dying evergreens and a grid of 20 decorative plum trees that were planted incorrectly. We are currently in the 3rd year of a 4-year plan to convert the entire acre into lush farm land. In the first year, we conducted soil tests to ensure the health of the land, converted ¼ acre to vegetable production, and built four 64 cubic foot compost bins. In our second year, we converted another ½ acre to vegetable and flower production, installed a 20’x50’ greenhouse to maximize our growing capacity year round, and built another four 64 cubic foot compost bins. Each year, we have run a 20 week farmers market from the site that has sold over 25,000 pounds of produce to date; accepts EBT, WIC, and Senior Checks; and includes regional farmers who increase the offerings at the market. At each market, our teens run cooking demonstrations and give farm tours to visitors.

We have planned a thriving production farm that changes with the seasons, so our efforts will continue for many years. The beauty of this project is that it connects students and the surrounding neighborhood to the seasonal cycles of Mother Nature. Working year-round with nature builds our awareness of the uniqueness of every moment while also allowing us learn from seasonal life cycles and build on our knowledge each year. Our students continue to bring new energy to the project every season, designing new ways to be involved with the food being grown on site and related projects that raise awareness about the importance of access to fresh food.

Groundbreaking March 2010

Wrestling Practice

Harvesting 2011

Harvesting 2010

Harvesting 2010

Harvesting 2011

Harvesting 2011

Spring 2011

Farmers Market 2011

Cooking Demo 2011
(Summer of Celebration)

Farm Club Mural 2010

Community Farm
Meal 2011

Composting 2010

Teen Ad 2012

Teen Ad 2012

Hoophouse 2012

Cooking 2010

Service Day 2012

HARVESTING KNOWLEDGE

Hundreds of East Flatbush students see their efforts take root in farm & market

BY BEN CHAPMAN
PHOTOS BY NICHOLAS FEVELO

FROM SEED to stomach, these Brooklyn kids know their veggies.

The process that provided that knowledge began on a cold, overcast day back in March, when students at the High School for Public Service in East Flatbush broke ground on a 10,000-square-foot vegetable farm on the school's front lawn.

None of them imagined the plot, at the old Wingate High School campus on Kingston Ave., would bloom into a real farm with 60 varieties of vegetables, including tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, peppers and corn.

"It's really cool to see how the vegetables have grown," said student farmer Brianna Sears, 15, of Canarsie. "I wasn't expecting it to become a such a big farm."

About 150 students worked on the farm in the spring, under the leadership of principal Ben Shuldiner.

"The kids really loved being outside and seeing something grow," said Shuldiner, who conceived the project with Stacey Murphy, founder of BK Farmyards, an urban farming collective that designed and operates the farm.

The students dug out the rows where the veggies were planted, sowed the seeds, then made sure weeds didn't ruin the plots.

"Pulling the weeds was the hardest work," Sears said. "They grew everywhere. You sweat and sweat, but it's worth it."

The harvest began in June, and the farm now yields about 500 pounds of fresh vegetables every week.

PTA volunteers and students hold a farmers' market at the school every Wednesday from 3:30 p.m. until 7 p.m., selling about $400 worth of produce each time.

Neighborhood residents are grateful for the convenient source of fresh, affordable produce.

"It's a joy to have the market here," said Janice Briggs, a hospital worker from Flatbush, who visited the market last week to buy lettuce and eggplant. "The vegetables are delicious."

Richard Au (above) makes some salsa out of fresh veggies from farm on front lawn of High School for Public Service. Donasia Sykes (center) picks something to eat for lunch. Principal Ben Shuldiner (top r.) took the lead in creating the project. He got lots of help from students (l. to r.) Zachary Tomlinson, Ruth Leger and Nadia Zaman.

PROJECT PLANNING

Mission

To manage a youth-powered farm that produces a bountiful, healthy harvest
To be an outdoor classroom where youth can learn about food and farming
To motivate and inspire students to eat healthier
To help students cultivate their leadership and advocacy skills
To give students the opportunity to work at a farmers market
To challenge students to lead cooking demonstrations and farm tours
To provide affordable fruits and vegetables to the community
To engage students in environmental stewardship
To improve the quality of life in Brooklyn

Planning

Because our school was working closely with Coro and investigating the relationship between food access and health concerns in our community, our attention naturally shifted to the 1-acre front lawn that sat unused. We contacted BK Farmyards, a collective of farm consultants, who helped our team decide the best course of action for the resources and time that we had available. We created two teams for the planning process, a Teacher Farm Advisory Board and a Student Farm Club who meet weekly to craft the mission for the farm and plan farm activities. While BK Farmyards and Green Guerillas have been the primary planners for the farmers market, including all the New York State Ag & Markets paperwork, the PTA has been involved in the farmers market and currently sells fruit from a regional farmer at the farmers market to fundraise for the PTA.

Now that the farm has been producing and selling lots of food for the last two years, the students are forming another group called the Advocates who's primary goal is to raise awareness about the farm, food justice issues, and the importance of fresh food in our daily lives. This group will use the farm as a demonstration of community organizing and how groups can grow their own food. They hope to spread the word online using social media and also to local elected officials so that resources could be allocated for school farms.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

The HSPS students were already leaders in community service, and the farm provided another opportunity for them to make the neighborhood a better place to live. A 1-acre farm is an enormous project with so many opportunities for youth engagement. Almost every student has helped shape the project whether he/she was a part of the after school Farm Club, a sports team, a classroom, a volunteer, or an intern. With all these activities, students get community service hours that help them graduate.

The extraordinary task of double digging ¾-acre of the sod lawn has all been done by hand. Students have volunteered on weekends and after school, and sports teams like the wrestling team use the opportunity during practice to build muscle and stay in shape.

The Farm Club is composed of 30 core students and meets weekly for 90 minutes. TRhey have created, managed, and executed many farm projects, inculding:

- Drafting the mission statement for the farm
- Designing and painting a 100' x 15' mural in the cafeteria depicting the planting of the farm and beautifying the community.

- Designing and 'building' the outdoor classroom area as a symbol of the sun: this space can be used by any teacher to conduct lessons outside on the farm.
- Holding a compost awareness day in the cafeteria helping other students identify what was compost-able and why.

Some of the Farm Club projects are multi-phased with a diverse set of skills used. For example, this winter, they grew sprouts to sell to a restaurant to make enough money to purchase a silk screen. They designed the silk screen, which they intend to use on re-usable grocery bags that they hand-sewed. They will sell these bags at the market to raise awareness about the number of plastic bags that are used in the food system.

Volunteers come out on Saturdays with student groups ranging from 5 to 40. Each teen group is structured with team captains and cheerleaders designed to make each group responsible for the execution of farm tasks. Teens get to practice their leadership and team-building skills. Group activities run the full range of farm activities: digging, planting, seeding, weeding, harvesting, composting, painting signs, and pest management.

Farm Interns work with local farmers every week after school to hone their horticultural and entrepreneurial skills. The 8 after school interns are building their career and technical skills and becoming experts leading other teens in seeding, irrigation, composting, and prepping new planting beds.

The Summer Youth Farmers Leaders Program is a paid summer position in which 12 teens work on the farm for 20 hours a week for 8 weeks. The mission of the program is for teens to develop their leadership and motivational skills while leading farmwork; to become food advocates while conducting cooking demonstrations, farm tours, and creating videos about food justice issues; and to develop entrepreneurial skills through the creation of business plans for selling value-added products at the farmers market.

PROMOTION

The Go Green! class has created fresh food advertisements for the last two years as a way to combat the 10,000 junk food advertisements they see on television. In January 2012, the class created a social media campaign to share their advertisements with their online friends, families, communities, and distant supporters. The Shout Out to Fresh Veggies online campaign brought nearly 500 clicks per image raising awareness about the health benefits of fresh food.

The youth farmers of HSPS have been featured in national publications including Whole Living May 2012, Family Circle (2011), and two soon to come out articles in Edible Brooklyn June 2012 and Grist. They have also been featured on Channel 12 and in the Daily News multiple times.

Because of their leadership, the youth farmers are asked to participate in food, health, and social justice panels all over the city. They have done cooking demonstrations for the New School 'Carrot City', a 500 person urban agriculture event and Summer of Celebration event at the Brooklyn Children's Museum where they caught the ear of Christine Quinn and many other local elected officials.

Last year, to promote the farm within the school community, the students had the

idea for FARMival, a carnival hosted on the farm after school. The event was a fall harvest celebration featuring baking contests, apple bobbing, pumpkin carving, an egg toss, and urban hay rides.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

The High School for Public Service recognized that we could easily clean up the school grounds and manage a small school garden with the group of dedicated teachers and students, but we also recognized that the 1-acre front lawn was an incredible opportunity to have a real impact on the health of the school community and the surrounding neighborhood. We consulted with BK Farmyards to help us understand what was possible on our land, and what it would take to create a sustainable farm for the school community. We then partnered with Green Guerillas, a not-for-profit who helps community groups cultivate their gardens and engages youth in food advocacy.

Working with these grass roots organizations, the school has networked with dozens of local groups in the good food movement and these organizations continue to bring resources to the project to magnify the intentions of our students. Green Guerillas manages the farm programs on site and has 5 part time staff year round as well as two Americorps positions to help during the summer. Green Guerillas staff creates crop plans for the year and manages farm operations to ensure that the space is prepared for all school activities. They also raise all the money to run the farm programs. Because the farm is a GreenThumb and GrowNYC Grow to Learn site, it also receives material donations regularly, primarily compost, lumber, and seedlings. Grow to Learn also provides a harvest meal made from fresh, local produce in the school cafeteria twice a year for the entire school body. Local colleges have been engaged in the process as well. The New School has conducted research on food justice issues the last two years in collaboration with the teens. Each year, we work with an intern from the NYU Masters in Public Health Nutrition program who prepares youth with cooking skills and trains them to do cooking demonstrations for the public.

Working with local organizations has also provided career development and entrepreneurial opportunities for our students, creating more interest in student activities on the farm. The Summer Youth Farmer Leaders program is a paid summer job that not only teaches them how to farm, but also focuses on developing the teens motivational, leadership, communication, and entrepreneurial skills. This Green Guerillas program uses the farm as a tool for engaging youth in food justice advocacy in their community. Through a NYC Food & Fitness collaboration, we will work with Youth Tillers, Bushwick Campus Farm, East New York Farms!, and Flip the Table Youth Council to give youth opportunities to network with youth who are doing similar food advocacy work in other Brooklyn neighborhoods. Youth groups already on site are getting more involved with the farm as well, the students in Build On and Global Kids have requested integrating their programming with the farm wherever possible.

EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION

While teens study biology, history, civilization, math, and health in school, the Youth Farm is a place where they can bring all those lessons together to understand a holistic health that includes environmental and cultural sustainability, fair economics for food production, and personal health. Physically working on the farm roots this knowledge in their bodies and will affect the way they engage the food system for

the rest of their lives.

With the help of onsite farmer volunteers, we have created a year-round Elective sustainable farming and health curriculum that uses the farm as an outdoor classroom. Our Go Green class is a hands-on class that includes marking period topics such as food systems, health & nutrition, media awareness, food justice, environmental impacts of the food system, and lots of horticulture and farming. To date, 121 students have taken the Go Green class. The students harvest veggies and prepare and cook a farm-fresh, healthy $1-menu meal to prove there are options to the $1-menus at fast food restaurants. The students create an online fresh food campaign targeted at kids to combat the 10,000 junk food advertisements they see yearly. The students survey their communities for fresh food and write letters to their elected officials making suggestions for how fresh food could be made more available.

Many lesson plans are created around student questions. As an example, one of our students asked whether there was such a thing as healthy chocolate. We took the opportunity to not only discuss various sweeteners and their impacts on our health, but we introduced the concept of “Fair Trade” through international trade laws and also discussed workers’ rights and environmental sustainability. As a result, the teens have debated whether our personal health can be separated from the public’s health.

The Go Green class is also asked to take action based on their observations and experiences. At the end of the year, the students assess the school cafeteria and offer suggestions to make fresh food more available and enticing or to make the cafeteria more environmentally friendly. Last year, many students believed making fresh vegetable juice available in the cafeteria would significantly increase teens’ access to fresh produce. As a part of their proposal to the cafeteria, these teens conducted a fresh vegetable juicing demonstration and gave out samples to the whole school.

Many other classrooms have used the farm as well:

- The Music class studied Haitian drumming with Master Drummer Frisner Augustin and re-created a Haitian konbit, a traditional agricultural celebration and work party, on the farm during a volunteer day.
- The Human Rights class studied food access in the neighborhood, agricultural subsidies, and ‘Why a Big Mac is cheaper than a salad’
- Art classes have used the farm as inspiration for so many projects from photo collages to woven flower jewelry.
- English classes have studied the book ‘Like Water for Chocolate’ and written their own food memoirs. The students start with a taste test out on the farm to try first-hand sweet, sour, bitter, and spicy greens.
- Geometry classes have hand-built 8 cold frames and 4 compost bins to study the relationship between shapes.
- Theatre groups practice on the farm.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

What worked?

The key to this project's success was having core groups that planned projects (the Farm Club, Teachers Farm Advisory Board, and the Advocates) and then having these core groups reach out to get the rest of the school involved. Another key group in the planning and implementation of the project was the PTA. In addition to these core groups, there were two sets of key meetings taking place each week to address all daily operational questions and ensure goals are being met. The grass-roots organization managing the farm meets weekly with the school administration and also with the custodial staff on site. To make a project at this scale work, it is imperative to have an outside organization to help guide the process and create sustainable practices that the school, parents, or local community members can continue. Teachers and administrators already have a full set of responsibilities and will be unable to maintain such a large project.

What didn't work?

Initially, the PTA ran the farmers market, but the scale of the market was too big for them to handle. More appropriate for a PTA is to be one vendor at the farmers market who buys from a regional farmer at wholesale and marks up the price to raise money for the PTA. Having the partner organization run the farmers market worked much better since they have experience working with New York State Ag & Markets and all the necessary insurances and paperwork.

Applicability to other schools

While not every school is going to have access to land like this school has, there's much they can do. To have a reasonable idea of what it would take to sustain a project at another school, a professional grower should conduct a careful assessment of community resources to know what kind of project is appropriate. There are components of this project that are more easily replicated: composting is always possible, growing flowers where soil is contaminated can help remediate soil, an indoor tiered growing area might be appropriate where there is no access to land.

Measuring success

All 407 students in school have had opportunities to try new recipes and juices made from the farm-fresh vegetables, and many have taken recipes home to their families to recreate. A core group of 15 students have become experts in running cooking demonstrations and have been invited to events with prominent local elected officials and policy makers. Out of 407 students, 122 of them have made personal pledges that will impact not only their health, but also the health of the environment. These pledges range from not drinking sugary beverages to trying vegetarianism to eliminating the use of plastic water bottles and plastic bags from their lives. Online, the teens fresh food advertisements have been viewed over 2500 times. Farm Club continues to be the most popular after school club with 30 core members. Our students continue to ask, 'What more can we do?'

Our farmers market has 150 regular customers who say they buy our produce because they can't get fresh, affordable produce anywhere else in the community. To date, we have grown 25,000 pounds of produce, and approximately 25% of our customers are EBT, WIC, or Senior Check participants. The Youth Farm is a lively community green space with a daily buzz in what used to be a barren lawn.