

Last week, both of Mrs. Smart's classes had their last gardening class of the year. Time has flown by so fast, it seems like we have just gotten to know the students and now they are off to middle school. We harvested lots of potatoes and onions. Everyone who wanted them had onions and potatoes to take home. Other less plentiful things going into the harvest bags were tomatoes, peppers, squash, cucumbers, Swiss chard and miscellaneous herbs.

We hope families are enjoying the items the students are bringing home. Do give us feedback on our website. Just let us know if you were able to use the produce and how you used it. Leave your comments at the more/contact buttons at www.ofegrowers.org.

Two beekeepers showed up in Mrs. Smart's classroom with a demonstration hive to let the students know how important bees are to our food supply. They are such fascinating insects. It is estimated that up to 30 percent of our food is dependent on them. Mr. and Mrs. Opperman are beekeepers in Kingwood and can tell you lots of stories about their experiences. Please remember the insecticides used to kill pests like mosquitoes also kill bees. The bee population is declining and we must do everything we can to help them survive.

The **summer gardening program will start on June 6**. Fourth and Fifth grade students are welcome back on Thursdays throughout the summer, to help maintain the garden and share in the harvests. Students must bring an adult or older sibling who will stay with them for the duration of the session from 9:00 to 10:30.

Produce and fruit that ripens during summer break will be preserved by the Growers volunteers and offered for sale during Falcon Fest and throughout the fall until supplies are gone. This funds a good part of the program. Please support these sales if you want the gardening program to continue. Our other major sources of funding are ExxonMobil and MicroLife products.

The OFE Growers is a group of parents, grandparents, teachers, and community members who volunteer to maintain the gardens and nature areas at the school. We are a 501-c-3 all volunteer non-profit organization. Emily Fortner, a 5th grade science and math teacher, is the president of the Growers organization. We welcome new volunteers and support from you. Call Mrs. Fortner at 281-641-2834 or e-mail her at: emily.fortner@humbleisd.net, if you have questions or can help in any way. Donations can be sent to: OFE Growers, PO Box 1525, Kingwood, TX 77325. We appreciate your donations to help fund the gardening program. And yes, think of the value of all those groceries your students bring home.

Don't forget to take a look at the new content on our web site: www.ofegrowers.org. There you will find all the latest pictures from the gardens. Pictures are taken each week showing the students in action, the latest being on May 9th. After viewing the pictures, take a look at the "Board" for experiments and other current challenges. This week there is a "reading" to challenge your thought process. Go here to read it: <http://www.ofegrowers.org/readings.html> You can comment by going to the comment section of the website.

Two important dates coming up: On May 23 at 4 PM, the annual Growers meeting will be held. All are invited to come and participate if you are interested in seeing the gardening program continue. Funding, changes, and volunteer recruitment are always part of the discussion as well as election of officers. Do attend! Fourth grade students' parents and grandparents are needed to help with the program. If you cannot attend, please give us feedback on our web site prior to the meeting. Do try to attend gardening on Thursdays this summer, too.

Then on May 30th, the Growers and Students will have the annual harvest festival. While we can't invite parents, but if you are willing to help, we would love to include you. It is an all day commitment. E-mail Jo Sanders at josanders@verizon.net.

Thank you for giving us the privilege of working with your students this year. We hope we have helped them to understand how science and math are important everyday in their lives---even in the gardens. As your students bring their gardening booklets home, please take a few minutes to look through it and maybe save a space for it in your home library.