



Supplied Photo

PEST MANAGEMENT: Ethel A. Jacobsen Elementary School pre-K 3 teacher Jackie Ramillo and student Jafet Menendez usher a few ladybugs into the schoolyard garden in Surf City.

Lovely Ladybugs Unleashed

As the kindergarten and pre-K students at the Ethel A. Jacobsen Elementary School in Surf City learned this year, most ladybugs like to dine on plant-eating insects, and as such they are good fortune for crops and gardens. "Ladybugs, also known as lady beetles or ladybird beetles, are a very beneficial group of insects," explained Bianca Aniski, Student Health Services at the school.

Earlier in the school year, the students watched both ladybugs and butterflies hatch in their science center. Later, approximately 2,000 brightly colored, spotted little ladybugs were released into the school's garden, which functions as a site for many varied lessons for all grade levels.

"The ladybugs are part of our schoolyard

garden's pest management program, which not only helps to keep the garden pest-free but also helps to maintain our 'Certified Naturally Grown' status," said Aniski. "CNG status requires no pesticides and no chemical fertilizers to be used in the garden.

"Ladybugs in the garden are important because they are capable of consuming up to 50 to 60 aphids per day, but will also eat a variety of other insects and larvae, including scales, mealy bugs, leaf hoppers, mites and various types of soft-bodied insects."

This summer, "if Mother Nature cooperates," Aniski noted, CNG produce from the schoolyard garden will be sold at the Surf City Farmers' Market, Mondays from 8 a.m. to noon at the borough's volunteer firehouse, at 713 Long Beach Blvd. —JK.-H.