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Youth learn about gardening during summer garden workshop Monday

By JACQUELINE HOUGH

This summer, Kahisa Littles is in love with being outside in the dirt and garden.

She has been learning and growing flowers at her home.

On Monday, she and her son attended the two-hour summer garden workshop offered by The House of J Queen Green Farm at Bennettsville Primary School.

The workshops were a chance for youth ages seven to 12 years old to learn about the production of fresh vegetables in individual home grow bag gardens.

Littles and others at BPS, Clio Elementary, Wallace Elementary Middle School, and McColl Elementary Middle School learned about growing their food.

Littles said she could see herself continuing with it.

"I have flowers," she said. "I don't have a vegetable garden but now I feel like I want to start it."

Pat Henegan, chair of the Marlboro County Coordinating Council, said she wanted to give youth an opportunity to learn about gardening. The person she knew who was passionate about



Joshua Small helped his mother Heather Small put the plant in the home grow bag for their garden.

Photo by Jacqueline Hough

gardening was Jalaya Liles Dunn, owner, and operator of House of J Queen Green Farm.

Dunn has a curriculum through her company called Sowing Plants and Reaching Out (SPROUT).

Each participant received a garden startup kit that included a grow bag with soil; a summer vegetable transplant; two-three

summer vegetable seeds; four planter signs; one growing journal; a protective plastic tray/sheet.

Funding came from the Coordinating Council and Marlboro Empower Committee. Walmart, Lowes, and others donated seeds and other items.

(See GARDEN on pg. 2)



Eric Stubbs and Alanna Squire work together to transplant a tomato plant.
Photo by Jacqueline Hough

Garden

(Continued from pg. 1)

The youth had a chance to learn where their food comes from and understand how they can expand their roles as consumers, stewards, and producers in the local food system.

Participants took their grow bags home to nurture their very own home gardens. The grow journals were to document the sowing, growing and harvesting stages of their mobile home gardens during and post their growing session.

Dunn said right now, they are used to being consumers.

"They eat food," she said. "They buy food but now they will be producing. It is a little way of exposing them to new ways of growing and living and having a healthier lifestyle."

Gardening is a passion for Dunn. She also owns the House of J, a wellness company.

Dunn took a new and beginning farmers program through Clemson Extension in Columbia that opened her eyes to what farming looked like.

She wanted young people and adults to understand how they can thrive and live a healthy life by just planting a seed.

"Food alone has power

for our well-being," Dunn added, "I want to introduce that concept to all of us here in Marlboro County."

Sen. Gerald Malloy attended the workshop held at BPS and talked to those attending at the beginning.

He encouraged them to be self-sustaining.

"If you learn to do that, you can survive," Malloy said.

He grew up on a farm and talked about how it wasn't easy.

"As far as I could look, there would be rows that I ended up picking," Malloy said. "What I didn't think about then was the whole time I was a kid, I was never hungry. We were broke but we weren't poor." His dad had a seventh-grade education while his mom had a 10th grade one.

Malloy eventually became a lawyer.

"You all have a chance to be lawyers, doctors, teachers, firemen, or police," he said. "Or whatever you want to be in life."

For more information about the House of J and House of J Queen Green Farm, email Dunn at bewell@thehouseofj.net or visit www.thehouseofj.net.



Stacy Richardson and Delvon Coachman-Bethea learned about transplanting during a two-hour summer garden workshop.

Photo by Jacqueline Hough