

Ethel A. Jacobsen Elementary Wins Teaching Gardens Grant

February 10, 2021 By Juliet Kaszas-Hoch



Ethel A. Jacobsen Elementary School’s gardens continue to make the grade! The American Heart Association recently announced its 2020-21 Teaching Gardens Network grant recipients, and E.J. is among the 40 selected schools and community programs nationwide that will receive a \$2,000 grant and resources such as garden space mentors.

According to AHS, which has been fighting heart disease and stroke for nearly 100 years, the grantees “have showed tremendous commitment connecting children to gardens, and supporting health, nutrition and environmental stewardship.” The Teaching Gardens Network Grants are made possible by the company CAULIPOWER, the mission of which is to provide accessible nutrition. As AHS noted, “The Teaching Gardens play an important role in teaching children the importance of healthy eating. Teaching Gardens empower children to make healthier choices and promote healthy lifestyles at home and in their communities, starting with the fruits and vegetables they grow with their own hands.”

“Needless to say, we are beyond thrilled to receive recognition from the American Heart Association and to be deemed a valuable project to fund,” said Bianca Aniski, school nurse, health teacher and garden coordinator at the Surf City elementary school. “The E.J. Garden has been a real workhorse over the past decade, providing a venue for garden-based learning for students at Ethel Jacobsen.” The E.J. Garden has had its share of braving crazy weather, from floods to hurricanes, and basking in the joy of hundreds of busy little green thumbs as students enjoy veggies that have grown in their garden.”

With the grant funds, school staff will be able to “restore some of the weathered garden beds and bolster the compost bins into a more user-friendly version,” Aniski pointed out. “Soil remediation and reconfiguring the outdoor tables to make better use of the newly installed shade sails are on the top of the list. Spring will be an exciting time to roll up our sleeves and get to digging in the dirt!”

E.J. Principal Frank Birney was also thrilled about the grant award, stating, “The recognition from the American Heart Association is a testament to all of the hard work our staff, and especially students, put into the garden. The students have the opportunity to participate in all facets of the garden that include everything from planting to taste testing and everything in between.

“The E.J. School Garden has been a tremendous outdoor learning environment for our students and allows us to promote nutrition and the benefits of healthy eating.” —J. K.-H.