

Ethel A. Jacobsen Elementary School Awarded Green Space Blue Ribbon

More than 300 gardens throughout New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware – flower gardens, vegetable gardens, community gardens, urban farms, parks and more – vied for recognition in the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's 2018 Gardening and Greening Contest. The Ethel A. Jacobsen Elementary School in Surf City was named a blue ribbon winner in the children's/school garden category, underscoring the work that students, faculty, staff and community members have put in to the edible garden beds, flowers, wildlife habitat, monarch waystation and rain gardens on the school grounds.

"The Philadelphia Horticultural Society visited all of E.J.'s gardens and were ... amazed by the multiple links across the curriculum," said school nurse and garden guru Bianca Aniski. "We are excited that the E.J. Garden was recognized in the school garden category, and understand that it takes many 'green thumbs'; administrative and community support; flexible, imaginative teachers; and engaged students to have a successful garden-based learning program."

Superintendent Peter Kopack noted, "It's great to see the students engaged in so many learning activities,

Honored By Horticultural Society

and how the garden has grown. Mrs. Aniski, staff and parents, community members, and especially students tend to the garden throughout the year. The students are able to make so many connections to learning, and we deeply appreciate the time and efforts by all. As a district we are honored, and thank so many for their support."

According to Kevin Feeley, communications manager for the non-profit PHS, dozens of panels of judges visited 313 gardens in the tri-state region "to view the beautiful, well-designed spaces filled with a variety of color and texture. Gardens were judged on maintenance and horticultural practices, as well as the variety, color, and suitability of plantings. Judges also looked at the design and total visual effect of the gardens and awarded extra points for imaginative ideas and creativity."

"The Gardening and Greening Contest brings together such a diverse, talented collection of individuals and community groups who are passionate about enhancing our world

through horticulture," said Matt Rader, president of PHS, which was founded in 1827. "We are so proud of these gardeners' accomplishments and hope their participation will inspire their neighbors and fellow community members to start gardening and enter next year's contest, one of the many ways PHS engages people with horticulture and the joys of gardening."

A reception for this year's winners will be held in Philadelphia on Nov. 7. All winners will receive a garden sign and two tickets to the 2019 PHS Philadelphia Flower Show – "Flower Power" – held March 2-10 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center.

Back in Surf City, E.J.'s gardens will be the focus of an upcoming event, "Squashing Hunger," on Oct. 19, that will include a butternut squash taste test prepared by Ship Bottom's Greenhouse Café, featuring 15 pounds of squash from the school garden; a Skype interview with the author of *Sophie's Squash*; and a drive to benefit the St. Francis Community Center Food Pantry.

"Currently, the garden is being prepared for a long winter's nap that will include what remains of the summer garden being removed and planting beds remediated in prepara-



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tion for the two planting beds being made ready for our students to plant garlic," Aniski explained. "This year we harvested 25 pounds (!) of Certified Naturally Grown garlic that was available to our parents at E.J.'s Back-to-School Night, along with many fresh herbs, flowers and produce that included tomatoes, green beans, peppers, squash and cucumbers.

"And our schoolyard garden donated 6 pounds of tri-colored green beans, 2 pounds of radishes and many other donations of varying types of produce to the St. Francis Food Pan-

try," she added.

"Because of all the success the E.J. Garden has with the school community," said Kopack, "we look forward to planning and building a school garden at the LBI Grade School (in Ship Bottom) over the next year, and hope to have more to report by spring 2019."

"The students have made it very clear," quipped LBI Board of Education President James Donahower. "They just can't stop gardening!"

— Juliet Kaszas-Hoch
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