



For immediate release

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Contact:

Casey Wardlaw, MPH, RD, LDN
Nutrition Communications Specialist
Durham County Health Department
919-560-7854 (O) 919-949-1150 (C)
cwardlaw@ph.co.durham.nc

Y.E. Smith Elementary School Goes to Pot

For better health, most of our children could use more physical activity and more healthful food choices. On Thursday, May 13, each Y.E. Smith student will “go to pot” and have the chance to start those health improvements.

Each student will pot and take home a tomato plant and tools to care for it over the summer. By spending time weeding, watering and tending the plants, students will gain a bit more physical activity each week. By eating the results, they will get more vegetables and help improve their nutrition. Students will begin planting at 11:30 am, starting with the younger grades.

Sponsored by the Durham County Health Department’s Nutrition Division, the container tomato project is an outgrowth of the Durham Health Initiative introduced by Duke University. Y.E. Smith Elementary School is serving as a pilot school, trying different ways to improve health and control weight gain.

“It’s nice to have Michelle Obama’s backing on home gardens. The Nutrition Division has promoted “growing your own” for quite a while. When we change the home environment to include gardening—even in containers— families can see how easy it is. We hope they will take it up and expand it on their own over time,” says Casey Wardlaw-Czaplinski, RD/LDN of the Health Department.

“Container gardening is perfect in the city. Even folks living in apartments can do it. Since you can move the pots with the sun, the plants usually do pretty well. Tomatoes are among the easiest crops for pots, but many other crops work, too. One source of very clear container gardening information is The Ohio State University, <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1647.html>.”

Teachers have taken up the potted tomato project, too. Not only will they each take home a potted plant, but the art and science teachers will also use tomatoes as a basis for lessons.

“We’re sending home a log sheet with each student,” notes Becky Posada, RD/LDN, Health Department nutritionist assigned to YE Smith through the DINE for LIFE Program. “Students can track their plant’s growth, amount harvested, and how the tomatoes were used over the summer. When they bring back their logs in the fall, they will get an extra reward.”

Fun physical activity, fresh vegetables, and an extra reward: for Y.E. Smith students, “going to pot” is a good thing.

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