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BriarPatch, local schools and Sierra Harvest launch Apples for Gardens program

Grass Valley – BriarPatch Food Co-op is raising money for local school gardens through a new community program called Apples for Gardens.

The in-store program - a collaboration with 11 Nevada County schools and Sierra Harvest - launched August 1.

Each month, BriarPatch will donate 10 cents for every pound of apples sold to a participating school. At the end of each month, the Co-op will donate dollars directly back to a local school to help cover the costs of school educators and much-needed garden infrastructure. In 2019, the Co-op sold over 154,000 pounds of apples.

"We're so excited to launch this program. Despite the uncertainty of things around what school will look like this year, the gardens will keep growing and hopefully, the kids will be back learning in and enjoying them at a time when it's safe soon. It seemed like a bright spot we could help everyone focus on for the future," said Rebecca Torpie, BriarPatch Marketing Manager.

Even with the uncertainty of COVID-19 and Distance Learning, school gardens continue to need upkeep and maintenance. With customer support of this program, the community will keep gardens thriving and ready for the time when children can safely return to school.

"School gardens often fall victim to budgets or a dedicated volunteer who needs to move on to their next project. This new partnership between BriarPatch, the County Office of Education and Sierra Harvest will allow for school gardens to outlast any one funding source or incredible volunteer and provide exponential ways for kids to explore their natural world in relation to food, their health and their environment," said Aimee Retzler, Co-Director of Sierra Harvest.

Principal Katie Kohler of Chicago Park School looks forward to expanding the garden space, adding fruit trees and picnic tables and the number of days a garden educator from Sierra Harvest can be paid to work at her school's garden. Chicago Park School serves 150-185 students in Pre-Kindergarten to 8th grade and will be the first recipient of the program in August.



“I think it’s critical that we teach agriculture. It’s a big part of our community. Personally, I think it’s important for kids to know where their food comes from,” said Kohler.

Schools supported by the program include: Chicago Park School, Lyman Gilmore School, Deer Creek School, Seven Hills Middle School, Ready Springs Elementary School, Williams Ranch School, Alta Sierra School, Cottage Hill School, Union Hill School, Yuba River Charter School and Nevada City School of the Arts.

“I think this is a wonderful collaboration between BriarPatch, Sierra Harvest and our schools to help fund school site gardens. These gardens are such an important learning tool for students on where food comes from and this is a great way for the community to help by simply buying apples!” said Scott Lay, Nevada County Superintendent of Schools.

For more information, visit: <https://www.briarpatch.coop/apples-for-gardens-program/>



BriarPatch Food Co-op is a community-owned cooperative business. We provide our community with quality food and products, strengthen our local economy, and support local/regional businesses that are committed to regenerative agriculture, sustainability, humane practices, and organic farming.