

TWINSBURG

Nutrition and Wellness

"To encourage and offer opportunities for our students and staff to incorporate exercise and healthy eating as part of their lifestyle"



Twinsburg City Schools has partnered with the NFL and Fuel up to Play 60 to create Tiger Breakfast Rewards. Students are encouraged to get a healthy start to each day by eating breakfast at school! When they do they are eligible to win some very cool monthly prizes. Area business donated many of the prizes for 7th-12th graders (Chipotle, Fun 'n' Stuff, Sheetz and Dairy Queen), while the Fuel up to Play 60 grant provided funds to purchase promotional signs and other prizes for grades K-6. **The more times you eat breakfast at school...the more of a chance you earn to get a cool monthly prize!**



All of Twinsburg's schools are USDA certified as HealthierUS Schools! We are part of only **4%** of school districts nationwide that exceed all current USDA guidelines for food served in our schools. We always strive to serve food that is fresh, healthy, and appealing. This year we continue to break new ground by utilizing a Farm to School Grant that we were awarded to grow our own basil and oregano in our district to be utilize for our tasty, low sodium, homemade pizza sauce. **(see Twinsburg Tribune article below for more details)**

A garden grows at Twinsburg High

by Kristin Wedemeyer Goss

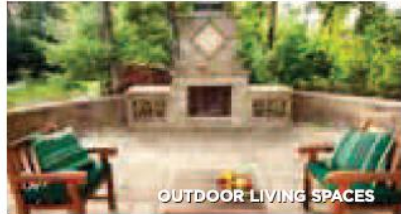
The unmistakable aroma of fresh oregano, sweet basil, garlic and tomato fills the air as a cook mixes a batch of pizza sauce. This kitchen, however, is not in a restaurant or pizzeria but at Twinsburg

High School.

Each week, food services cooks make between six and eight gallons of the sauce, which is used on the homemade pizzas served at each Twinsburg school. The sauce was the winning pick in a “cre-



Twinsburg High School junior Keith Harris waters oregano, one of the herbs grown at the school and used in the district's homemade pizza sauce. Photo by K. Goss



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ate your own low-sodium pizza sauce” contest devised by dietician and district Food Services Supervisor Mark Bindus.

“Each of my kitchens came up with its own recipe and made a pizza with it. I cooked all the pizzas and blind sampled it to them; they voted and chose their favorite sauce,” said Bindus. “I took the top two sauces and sampled them to Dodge, RBC and THS to figure out which one the students thought was best.”

Now fresh herbs for that sauce are being grown in a small room just off of the THS cafeteria.

The herb garden is funded by a \$1,900 Farm-to-School grant, which the Ohio Department of Education offers to school districts that participate in the National School Lunch Program.

“To be eligible for the grant, you must offer a program that brings fresh produce to the schools, either via local farmers or in-house gardens,” explained Bindus. “We used the grant money to purchase seed starters, grow lights, soil, fertilizer, seeds and various planting supplies.”

In October, Bindus planted the seeds in the starters and enlisted the help of THS special needs students as gardeners. “They mixed all of our soil and fertilizer and filled all of our planters and transplanted the seedlings of sweet basil and oregano into the planters. They water them and will help with harvesting useable prod-

uct once the plants reach maturity," said Bindus.

The primary caretaker now is THS junior, Keith Harris.

"We water them to keep them growing. Some died and we put in more. We just keep going," said Harris.

"Our cooks in our
Twinsburg Schools
are 'real cooks.'"

Mark Bindus
Food Services Supervisor

Instructor aide, Betsy Kaminsky, accompanies Harris on watering days and has observed the ups and downs of the growing process.

"We had so many oregano plants and they looked really good, but after a long weekend, we came back and many of them were brown. The oregano has been very tricky," said Kaminsky. Bindus and Kaminsky agree the herb garden teaches both science and life lessons as the students learn about the lifecycle of a plant and gain practical skills.

Bindus said the on-site herb garden also reinforces the importance of using fresh ingredients and making food from scratch. In addition to the pizza sauce, food services cooks make their own gravies, cheese sauces, syrup and low-sodium Asian sauces.

"What we do here with homemade food just isn't done in most school kitchens," noted Bindus. "We've needed to do it with reduced labor over the years, but it's possible if you commit to the training and changes it involves."

Bindus is passionate about his mission to encourage kids to eat well and make healthy choices and equally committed to changing perceptions about school cafeteria food.

"In a day when most schools just heat up pre-prepared, pre-packaged frozen foods, our cooks in our Twinsburg Schools are 'real cooks.' Like with this sauce and our homemade pizzas, we are always making things from scratch. The time and care that goes into that preparation show that our employees truly care about the students of Twinsburg schools, and they are proud of it," he said. ∞

The Twinsburg Tribune, May 2015

CHURCHES

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Upward basketball unites communities

by Kim Garred

The Upward Sports Program, found in over 2,000 churches covering 47 states, has one church right in Twinsburg's backyard. Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Solon offers the Upward Program to the surrounding communities. Twinsburg families add to the more than half a million participants.

Our Redeemer has offered the Upward basketball program for six years. Chris Turk, a previous volunteer and coach, is the program's current director.

"It truly is a program where 'God is in the Game.'" Turk said, "Ninety-five percent of the families participating are from outside the church, 35 percent are un-churched. We have an opportunity to share Christ and teach basic ball skills to so many kids."

"We started with around 86 kids in the program," he added. "We are now topping out at 164. We have 16 teams and 20 cheerleaders. Each year the program grows. It is an amazing outreach to join the communities together."

Kindergarteners through fourth-graders from Wilcox Primary and Bissell Elementary schools are among the program's participants, many of them playing structured basketball for the first time. In Upward, there is a little less focus on competition and more on development and teamwork, Turk said.

Tom and Diana Wolff of Twinsburg heard of Upward through the pre-school program at the church. They are in their second year.

"Our girls, Cassie and Millie, who both attend Bissell, love playing," Diana said. "They are sad it is the last game, but are already looking forward to next year. The program has helped them with confidence and sportsmanship. These are life skills. They are also getting a little exercise too."

Upward runs January through the first



Bissell Elementary student Cassie Wolff dribbles down the court during an Upward Bound basketball game. Photo by K. Garred

week in March. An eight-week season includes weekly practices, team photo concessions, uniforms and games every Saturday with a great celebration to end the season. During each game at ha

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