

Dole Packaged Foods joins Tops Family Markets and Captain Planet Foundation to Celebrate Project Learning Garden at Nardin Academy Elementary School

BUFFALO, N.Y., Sept. 22, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- Today Congressman Brian Higgins of the 26th District joined executives from Tops Friendly Markets, Dole Packaged Foods, Captain Planet Foundation and Nardin Academy Elementary School to inaugurate a special Learning Garden for the school. Together, these three organizations joined forces to offer Nardin students the opportunity to interact with the environment through a learning garden, while expanding their palates and learning about food origins.

Nardin won the Learning Garden by submitting an application to the "Learning Garden Grant" contest in spring of 2014. The contest offered elementary schools in the Tops Friendly Markets service area the chance to win a Learning Garden installation for their school. Of 47 nominations, Nardin Academy was one of the two winners (the other was Letchworth Elementary School).

"Here at Dole, we understand the importance of teaching children the benefits of incorporating fruits and vegetables into their diet, whether they are enjoying fresh produce from their learning garden, or a healthy Dole snack," said Larry White, Vice President - Sales, Dole Packaged Foods. "By partnering with Captain Planet Foundation and Tops Friendly Markets, we are helping more students learn about and develop healthy habits."

"Anything can be taught in the context of the garden, and hands-on learning supports student understanding of natural systems, food origins, and healthy eating," explained Leesa Carter, Executive Director of Captain Planet Foundation. "Captain Planet Foundation is dedicated to nurturing the next generation of environmental stewards, and ensuring they are armed with an understanding of the natural world in which they live. We are thrilled to be working with Tops Friendly Markets and Dole to provide Nardin with a CPF Learning Garden!"

"We are thrilled to provide this Learning Garden to Nardin Academy Elementary School " said Andy Brocato, Director of Public and Community Relations, Tops Markets. "Giving back to the neighborhoods we serve is incredibly important to us, and we are always looking for ways to improve the quality of the life for children through education around nutrition and healthy living."

"Nardin's Learning Garden and pollinator garden offers our community the possibility to explore place-based education through a variety of projects," said the Academy's Green Coordinator Nicole Capitumino. "The gardens afford us endless opportunity to advance our efforts in educating for sustainability in a fun and engaging way." Added Nardin's Chef Julie Levin, ***"To be impactful at Nardin, we resolve to patiently make common cause and patiently make a good example. That is the essential foundation of the Sustainable Nardin initiative, as is evidenced in our scratch cooked, zero waste dining hall, the outdoor learning classroom, or in our traditional classrooms."***

About Nardin Academy Elementary School

Nardin Elementary School is a school for boys and girls in kindergarten through eighth grade. We are consistently ranked as one of the top in the area because of our rigorous and enriching academic programs and opportunities for students to explore their talents in the visual and performing arts. For more information, please contact us at <http://www.nardin.org/elementary/index.html>

About Dole Packaged Foods

Dole Packaged Foods LLC, a subsidiary of Dole International Holdings, is a leader in growing, sourcing, distributing and marketing fruit, vegetables and healthy snacks throughout the world. Dole markets a full line of innovative packaged, frozen and dried fruit. The company focuses on four pillars of sustainability in all of its operations: water management, carbon footprint, soil conservation and packaging. For more information please visit www.dole.com or www.doleintlcsr.com.