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Well where do I start? Which is exactly what I thought two years ago when our school joined the Food for Life Partnership. The first thing we did was to set up our School Nutrition Action Group (also known as a SNAG) which is made up of students, staff, governors and even a local police officer. The group makes decisions like; what is grown in the garden, what our next community food event will be and even what colour we should paint the dining room – It has amazed me how inventive they have been!

The next thing we did was to start our “Garden of Eastwood.” We had help planning the garden from Garden Organic and members of staff, students and parents stepped up to the mark once again by not only helping, but also donating seeds and plants. Although, at first it was a little like the blind leading the blind, we went on to proudly harvest our first crop. The students now regularly bring things straight from the garden to the kitchen and we either use it in the school lunch or we work with small groups of students who make something with the produce that they helped to grow. We have also made up vegetable boxes and sold them to staff.

Once the garden was established, we were fortunate enough to set up a fantastic link with a local producer. ‘Redgates farm’ is less than a mile away from the school. Our catering service (Nottinghamshire County Council) have been very supportive and now all of our eggs and meat are sourced from there. Consequently, the school has been able to reduce it’s “food miles” considerably. This partnership has gone from strength to strength. The farm now hosts regular educational visits and they even allowed us to adopt a calf and lamb which the students named “Eric and Ernie!”

I am proud to say that we have successfully hosted some great community food events using produce from the garden. This has enabled us to share the food related work we have been doing with the local community. We have had a group of senior citizen’s in for a Harvest Lunch where they had meat and vegetable stew, hosted a “Lad’s and Dad’s” cookery demonstration and then sat and ate a pre-match meal. In addition, we have organised “Hog Roasts” and “BBQ’S” at the school’s music festivals and provided sample meals for parent evenings. These events have all been great fun not only to organise but to

see it all come together in the end and everyone having a great time!

Being part of the project has helped to raise the profile of the kitchen staff in the school. It has enabled us to work more closely with staff, students and members of the local community. We have even helped students attain their Basic Food Hygiene Certificate and we know of at least three students who have left school and started work in the catering industry.

I can’t deny that there has been a little more work involved for me and my fantastic staff, who without their help I could not have taken on any of this. However, I would definitely recommend this project to any catering team, who are interested in helping students acquire a greater understanding of all things food related.

Nottinghamshire