



2022-2023

FARM TO SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT

In partnership with Monroe County School District



USDA FARM TO SCHOOL GRANT

For the 2022-23 school year, SOS was one of 123 grant awardees of the prestigious United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm to School Grant (F2S).



Since 2017, SOS has operated a Nutrition and Agricultural Education Program to empower children to make healthier decisions. Our students are taught how to read and understand nutrition labels, make healthy snacks, and tend to their classroom's aeroponic Tower Garden!

The F2S grant enabled SOS to expand our program to three Title I schools throughout the district, and to incorporate school-wide taste tests and local agricultural professional guest speakers.

F2S grants are imperative for equitable hunger-relief and nutrition security for children in the U.S. By targeting Title I schools that have a high economically disadvantaged student enrollment rate, SOS empowers low-income families to make more informed, healthy, and affordable food choices.

**MCS D
Partner Schools:**



91%

of students wanted more
SOS Nutrition and
Agriculture lessons

"I have learned so many
new things, such as
what season certain
fruits and vegetables
grow in, [and] about the
nutrients of vegetables
and fruits."

-LEILA

98%

of students self-reported
what they learned throughout
the semester was partly,
mostly, or entirely new

NUTRITION EDUCATION LESSONS

SOS curated 16 nutrition and agricultural education lessons based on a curriculum by Common Threads, a national nonprofit that supports healthy eating, in conjunction with our staff's own agricultural research and expertise. These lessons also support several 4th and 5th grade Florida state standards for science curriculum, covering topics such as seed dispersal, plant reproduction, gravity, and more.

Throughout the semester, we educate Monroe County students about food systems and nutrition, while teaching them long-lasting skills to support healthy living. Each lesson incorporates an applicable healthy snack, activity, and reading.

10
CLASSROOMS

191
STUDENTS

16
WEEKS

01
Chef's Plate

03
Seeds We Eat

05
Roots and Stems

07
Whole Grains

09
Healthy Hydration

11
Fats

13
Hands on Cooking

15
Field Trip

02
Nutrition Labels

04
Fruits and Veggies

06
Protein

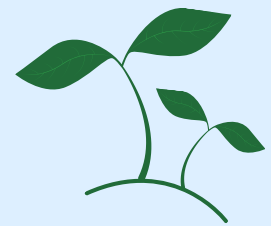
08
Intro to Agriculture

10
Fruits and Flowers

12
The Whole Plant

14
Guest Speaker

16
Review



TOWER GARDENS

Agricultural education has always been a cornerstone of SOS's nutrition education efforts. Each classroom we work with is equipped with its own aeroponic Tower Garden to provide students with hands-on gardening experience. Students are responsible for Tower Garden upkeep, including measuring pH levels and adding nutrients.

For many students, the Tower Garden serves as their first exposure to any type of agriculture! The unique landscape and climate of the Florida Keys limits conventional, in-ground agriculture. Tower Gardens are a vertical, soil free alternative to combat these barriers to farming in Key West, while also using 70% less space and 90% less water.



82%

of students
gained a better
understanding of
agriculture

95%

of students can
identify at least one
barrier to agriculture
in the Florida Keys

WEEKLY SNACKS



3,056

healthy snacks served



Every week, students were provided a healthy, and delicious snack, tailored to the week's specific lesson. Many of these snacks utilized the produce grown in the Tower Gardens, including basil, kale, cilantro, and nasturtium. Students were also provided a step-by-step recipe sheet that detailed how to make the snacks for continued use at home.



HANDS-ON LESSONS

To help students practice their cooking skills, SOS hosts a hands-on lesson where students make a savory and a sweet rice cake snack! During this lesson, students learn how to follow a recipe for the savory rice cake (avocado, cucumber, everything bagel seasoning), as well as use their creativity to create their own sweet rice cake using sunbutter, greek yogurt, honey, and a variety of fruits and sweet toppings. Students are also taught food safety practices and how to safely handle cooking equipment.



"It was fun when we got to make our own rice cakes and they were really good."

-KINZLEY



TASTE TESTS



1,141

healthy samples served

Over the past school year, SOS hosted taste tests at schools participating in our Farm to School Program. In the Fall semester, we had students at Gerald Adams and Poinciana Elementary Schools try a cucumber radish salad. This Spring, we had students from those same schools try a carrot and green onion salad.



68%

of students reported they would try the cucumber radish salad again

74%

of students reported they would try the carrot and green onion salad again

FIELD TRIPS

This year, SOS hosted field trips to Grimal Grove for all students participating in our 16-week Farm to School Program. Grimal Grove is a tropical fruit garden located on Big Pine Key, and it is home over 150 fruit trees that produce over 50 species of fruit. With such limited opportunity for agriculture in the Keys, these field trips were an amazing opportunity for students to connect with local farming and try a variety of local fruits!



"The field trip to Grimal Grove was exciting and surprising at the same time. I loved when we got to try unusual fruits like breadfruit and star apple. My favorite thing was when we got to see the turkeys and chickens."

-BRIELLE

Students learn the importance of pollinators, such as butterflies, in our ecosystem.

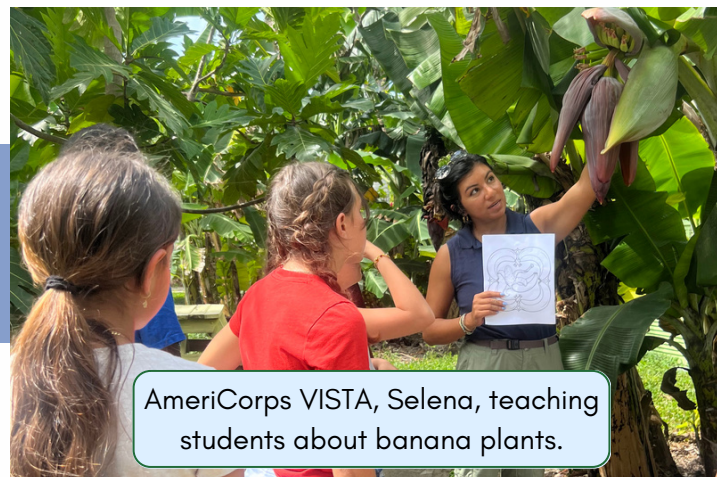


Pressing their own sugar cane juice!

Meet Patrick!

Patrick Garvey, owner of Grimal Grove, has been a kind and resourceful partner to SOS.

On the field trip, students got to try star apple, sugar cane juice, and cocoa seed. Thank you, Patrick and his team, for all that you do!



AmeriCorps VISTA, Selena, teaching students about banana plants.

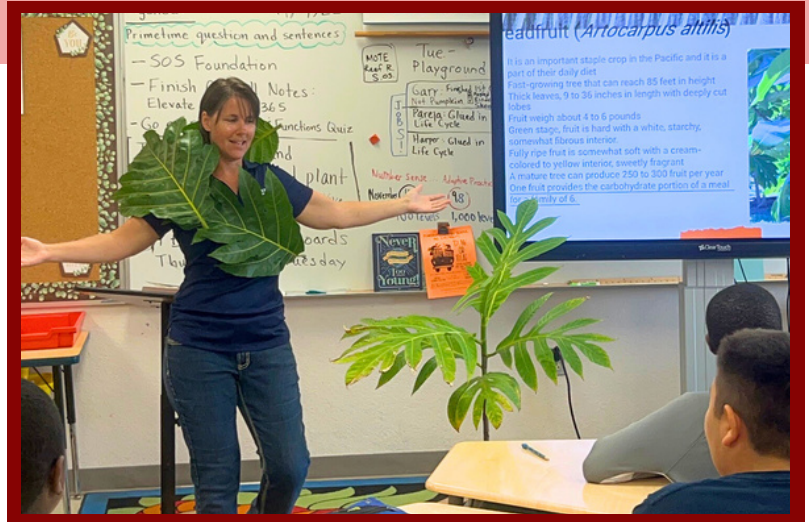
GUEST SPEAKERS

In partnership with the University of Florida's Extension Program, SOS invited three guest speakers to share their agricultural knowledge and expertise.

History of Breadfruit

Michelle Mularz-Leonard teaches students about the superfood, breadfruit! Breadfruit is regarded as a nutritionally dense superfood that tastes like an artichoke, a potato, or a sweet bread depending on when it's picked.

Fun Fact
Breadfruit leaves stick to your clothes!



Climate Change

Alicia Betancourt came to discuss climate change with one of our classes.

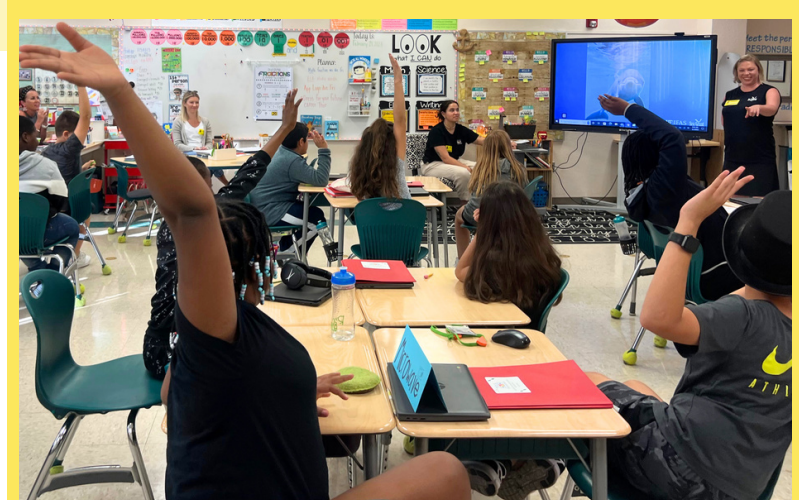
Students had the opportunity to apply classroom topics to how they can decrease their carbon footprint such as eating a seasonal diet.



Aquaculture & Fisheries

SOS welcomes Shelly Krueger to discuss aquacultures and fisheries in Florida.

Did you know?
Florida's fishing industry supports nearly 4,000 jobs!



MEET THE TEAM



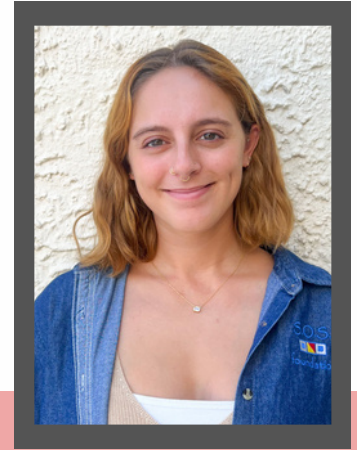
Rebekah MacArthur

Farm to School Program Manager
SOS Nutrition Programs Coordinator



Phoebe Ambrose

Farm to School Educator
AmeriCorps VISTA
Poinciana Elementary



Georgi Munick

Farm to School Educator
AmeriCorps VISTA
Gerald Adams & Poinciana Elementary



Selena Quintanilla

Farm to School Educator
AmeriCorps VISTA
Gerald Adams & Stanley Switlik
Elementary



Lindsay Volpenhein

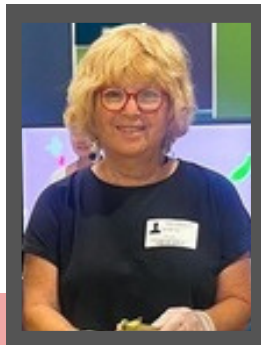
Farm to School Educator
AmeriCorps VISTA
Poinciana Elementary



Olivia Harrison

Farm to School Educator
AmeriCorps VISTA
Gerald Adams & Poinciana Elementary

Our volunteers joined each week to assist in each classroom! Thank you to Jill, Bill, Shelly, Sara, and Barb (not pictured).



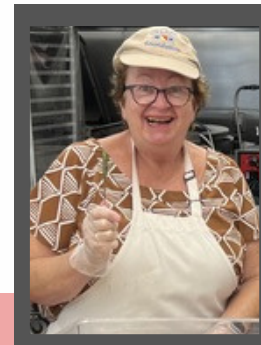
Jill

Gerald Adams



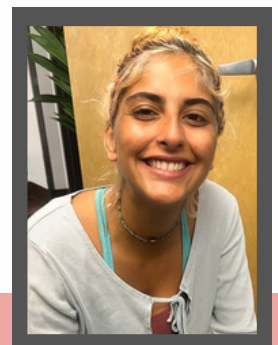
Bill

Stanley Switlik



Shelly

Gerald Adams



Sara

Poinciana

LOOKING AHEAD

SUMMER 2023

SOS is continuing our Farm to School Program for the upcoming summer by teaching eight-week courses at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Key West and Big Pine.

The classes will also have an aeroponic gardening system, weekly snacks and activities, and hands-on elements.



FALL 2023

SOS is returning to MCSD classrooms for the 2023-2024 school year!

We look forward to continuing to build our Farm to School Program among the changing needs of our Monroe County community.



GET INVOLVED!

Interested in donating your resources or time to help SOS continue our Farm to School Program?

[***Learn More!***](#)