



2023-2024

SMART SPROUTS ANNUAL REPORT

In partnership with Monroe County School District

S.O.S.



Foundation



SMART SPROUTS

During the 23-24 school year, SOS continued building upon the success achieved by our 2022-2023 USDA Farm to School Grant.



Since 2017, SOS has held a Nutrition and Agricultural Education Program to help children make healthier choices. Students learn to read nutrition labels, prepare healthy snacks, care for their classroom's aeroponic Tower Garden, and more!

This year, we rebranded the program as Smart Sprouts, a 16-week curriculum that enriches students' classroom experiences by exposing them to real-life food systems. Through weekly lessons and exciting events such as school-wide taste tests, guest speakers, hands-on cooking lessons, field trips, and more, Smart Sprouts teaches practical ways for students to take initiative over their diets, health, and surrounding environment.

In 2023-2024, we made significant progress by expanding Smart Sprouts to Horace O'Bryant School in Key West, furthering our reach to our community.

MCS D
Partner Schools:



100%

of our spring semester Smart Sprouts students tried something new in our classes

"I learned about eating healthy and it inspired me to help in the kitchen."

-CAROLINE

HORACE O'BRYANT ELEMENTARY

98%

of our 23-24 Smart Sprouts students expressed confidence in planning and preparing snacks

WEEKLY 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 nutrition and 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.

11

CLASSES

200

STUDENTS

16

WEEKS

1. CHEFS PLATE

2. NUTRITION LABELS

3. SEEDS WE EAT

4. FRUITS AND VEGGIES

5. ROOTS AND STEMS

6. PROTEIN

7. WHOLE GRAINS

8. INTRO TO AGRICULTURE

9. HEALTHY HYDRATION

10. FRUITS AND FLOWERS

11. FATS

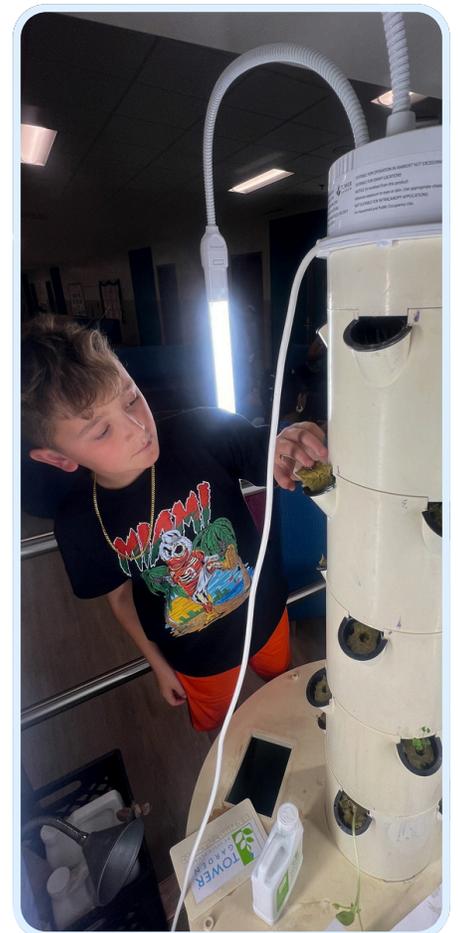
12. THE WHOLE PLANT

13. HANDS ON COOKING

14. GUEST SPEAKER

15. FIELD TRIP

16. REVIEW



TOWER GARDENS

82%

of students
gained a better
understanding of
agriculture

95%

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

Each classroom participating in Smart Sprouts had the opportunity to help operate their own aeroponic Tower Garden. Throughout the semester, seeds go through the entire plant life cycle, growing foods like basil, marigolds, nasturtium, and more! The herbs, fruits, and flowers are sometimes even harvested and used in the weekly snacks, creating a farm-to-table experience for our students.

For many of our students, Tower Gardens are their first true exposure to agriculture, and getting hands-on experience helps to expand the understanding of how food systems operate in our society.



WEEKLY SNACKS

Each weekly lesson is accompanied by a delicious, healthy, easy-to-make snack for students to replicate and make at home. From basil hummus to a freshly prepared strawberry pineapple frozen fruit pop, these snacks are constantly impressing our students! Some snacks even incorporate greens grown in their class' Tower Garden.



3,056
healthy snacks served this year



“My favorite part was trying all the new healthy healthy and yummy foods.”

**-ISABELLA
POINCIANA ELEMENTARY**

HANDS-ON LESSONS

SOS believes in equipping our students with the skillsets needed to adopt a healthy diet, so we host a hands-on cooking lesson for each participating class!

Students gain valuable cooking skills by making a delicious avocado and cucumber rice cake, practicing recipe-following, chopping, and more. Later, students bring their creativity into the kitchen and design a unique "sweet cake" recipe with toppings like fresh fruit, jellies, and more.



"My favorite thing I learned is how to make the sweet rice cake"

**-SUENDY
POINCIANA ELEMENTARY**



TASTE TESTS



1,616

healthy samples served

Each semester, SOS prepares a taste-test of a healthy snack which utilizes locally-grown, in season fruits and vegetables. At our three participating schools, each student had the opportunity to expand their palates while trying something new and learn about the benefits of eating locally-produced foods.

Students tried a corn salad in the fall and a ratatouille pasta sauce in the spring!

63%

of students reported they would try the corn salad again!

62%

of students reported they would try the ratatouille pasta sauce again!



FIELD TRIPS

This year, SOS hosted field trips at The SOS Eco Farm for all students participating in our 16-week Smart Sprouts program. During the field trip, students reinforce the sustainable agriculture concepts covered in the classroom and gain a first-hand look at a working and innovative urban farm. Students learn about aeroponics and farm mechanics, dive into the barriers of traditional agriculture in the Florida Keys, and how Tower Gardens overcome these barriers. To close the field trip, students harvest produce for a delightful farm-to-table snack!



197
Students educated at The
SOS Eco Farm



Students get to harvest basil from The SOS Eco Farm and use it in a tasty, freshly prepared pesto!



Students learning about plant life cycles!



9
field trips hosted
at The SOS Eco
Farm



Students from GAE smile after a fun day at The SOS Eco Farm.

GUEST SPEAKERS

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



Pollinators



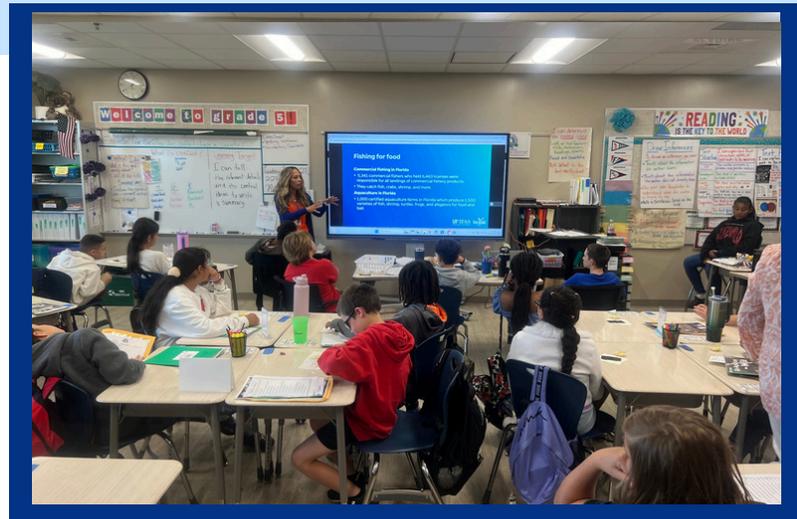
Maria Quirico came to discuss pollinators with two classes.

Pollination is an important process in agriculture. Students learned how pollinators affect our food systems and our climate.

Aquaculture & Fisheries

Brynn Morey and Shelly Krueger joined eight classes to discuss aquaculture and fisheries in Florida.

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

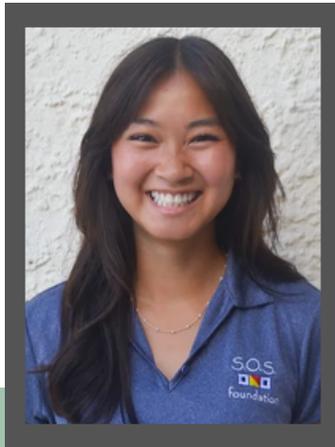


MEET THE TEAM



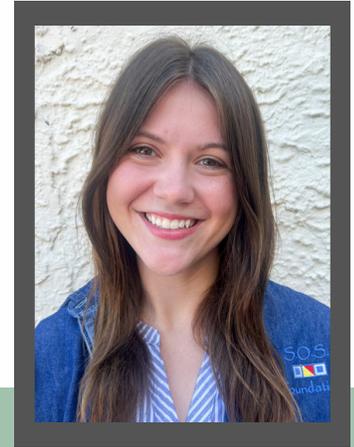
Rebekah MacArthur

Smart Sprouts Program Manager
SOS Nutrition Programs Manager



Phoebe Ambrose

Smart Sprouts Educator
AmeriCorps VISTA
Poinciana Elementary



Lindsay Volpenhein

Smart Sprouts Educator
AmeriCorps VISTA
Poinciana Elementary & Horace O'Bryant



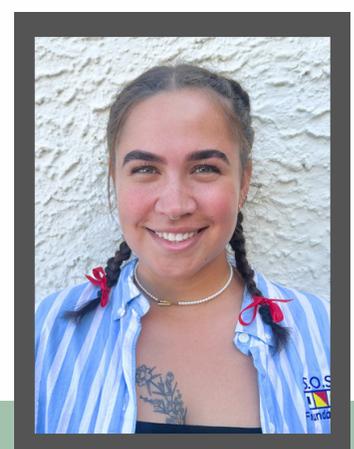
Georgi Munick

Smart Sprouts Educator
AmeriCorps VISTA
Gerald Adams Elementary



Andrea Garduno

Smart Sprouts Educator
AmeriCorps VISTA
Horace O'Bryant Elementary



Olivia Harrison

Smart Sprouts Educator
AmeriCorps VISTA
Gerald Adams & Poinciana Elementary & Horace O'Bryant

Our volunteers joined each week to assist in each classroom!
Thank you to Rebecca, John, Jill, Lawrence, Shelly, Aydan, and Ruth.



Rebecca

Poinciana Elementary



John

Horace O'Bryant



Jill

Gerald Adams & Poinciana Elementary & Horace O'Bryant



Lawrence

Horace O'Bryant



Shelly

Gerald Adams



Aydan

Gerald Adams & Horace O'Bryant



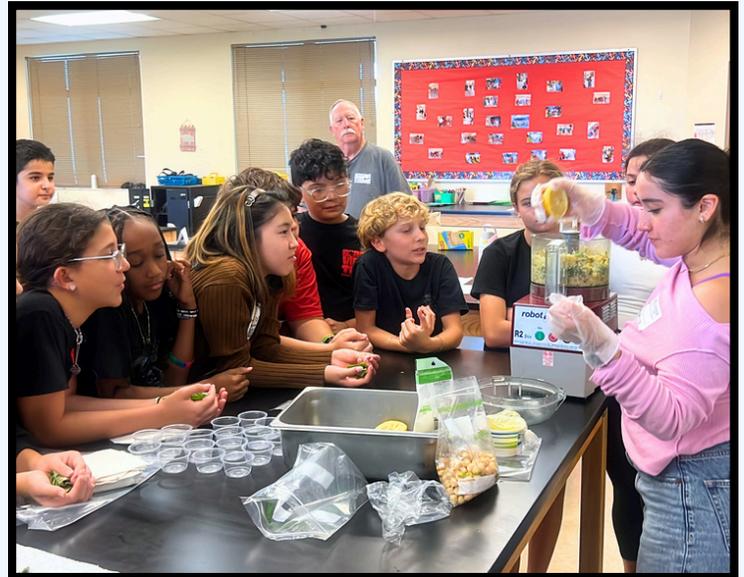
Ruth

Poinciana Elementary

LOOKING AHEAD

FARM TO SCHOOL 2024

SOS is extremely honored to announce that we are a recipient of a 2024 USDA Farm to School grant!



This grant will enable SOS to continue our Smart Sprouts program while expanding our curriculum to include an exciting monthly Lunch-and-Learn events!

At these Lunch-and-Learn events, SOS will educate students about the food system and how it relates to their school lunches.

GET INVOLVED!

Interested in donating your resources or time to help SOS continue our Smart Sprouts program?

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