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New York State Agricultural Experiment Station

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cornell Scientists Partner with Geneva Schools for Summer Science Camp

By Tim P. Krakowiak

GENEVA, NY: For the second year in a row, faculty from Cornell University are partnering with the Geneva City School District to put on a summer science day camp for third graders. The students got an early start planting seeds into peat pots, while the scientists got an early start planting the seeds of possible careers in horticulture and science into the minds of the students.

This year's science camp runs from June 26 to August 3. Third graders from West Street and North Street Elementary Schools are participating. The camp is being led by Christine Smart, a Cornell plant pathologist who works at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, and project director Paul Tucci, who teaches English as a second language at North Street, and is also certified in biology and science. Matty Brooks, the school science aide, helps facilitate all aspects of the program.

Science exposure was good for last year's students. According to the annual New York State science assessment scores just released, 95 percent of the fourth grade students at North Street School ranked at levels 3 and 4, the highest level being mastery of the subject—a 6 percent improvement from last year—and over 50 percent of the students scored at the mastery level.

"I certainly attribute the student's excitement and enthusiasm in the skills and concepts of science to the Experiment Station," said North Street principal, Nina McCarthy—adding that all science camp participants passed.

The partnership began in 2005 when North Street Elementary School received a grant to grow a garden through the Cornell Kids Growing Food (KGF) program. When McCarthy saw how much work Station faculty put into the gardens, she organized a summer science camp for 2006 in cooperation with the Station.

"The school district certainly puts a high priority on the program, and both Paul and Matty put in a huge effort to make the camp successful," said Smart. "All the scientists at the Station have been enthusiastic about being involved, and do a fantastic job explaining their particular area of expertise to the kids."

Others from the Station who are involved in the project include: Stephen Reiners and Courtney Weber in horticultural sciences; Charlie Linn, Brian Nault and Greg English-Loeb in entomology; Betsy Bihn in food science and technology; and Beth Gugino and Holly Lange in plant pathology.

Earlier this spring, Smart and Reiners visited the two public elementary schools and helped students plant vegetable and flower seeds into peat pots. The pots were brought back to grow in a Station greenhouse. Several weeks later, students visited the Station, checked on their plants' progress, and brought most of them back to transplant into the gardens at their schools, which they had also prepared.

Pictures are linked to hi-res scans



Suggested photo caption: Holly Lange, from the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station's plant pathology department, talks to Geneva elementary school students at the Summer Science Camp about a research project in one of the Station greenhouses.

During the camp, students will have a chance to learn more about where food comes from. They will also learn about soil science, plant anatomy and genetics, insects, plant diseases, food science and integrated pest management. They will take a field trip to the Finger Lakes Institute at Hobart and William Smith (HWS) Colleges in Geneva, where they will be hosted by HWS education outreach coordinator, Marc Edwards.
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