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Belchertown, Granby & Amherst

SENTINEL

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Police launch app

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BELCHERTOWN – Residents will have a new way to receive important information from police, following the launch of a new application for smart phones.

Belchertown Police Sgt. Kevin Pacunas said shortly after Chief Christopher Pronovost started with the department, the two began discussing different community policing initiatives. Pacunas had seen similar apps used by other police departments in the eastern part of the state and decided to look into launching one for Belchertown.

"It's a way to push important messages out instantly," said Pacunas, giving examples of road closures, missing people alerts and any other emergency situation of which residents should be aware.

The app, which is called MYPD, is for informational purposes only. No one should

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Students learn how to grow their own food

By Aimee M. Henderson
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BELCHERTOWN – "It takes a village to raise a meal."

That's the message Belchertown High School sci-

ence teacher Louise Levy is passing onto to her "Life on Earth" students and to the first graders at Swift River Elementary School.

In a special collaboration between the high school and

elementary school, first graders got to get their hands dirty in the community garden located right at their school. High school students, mostly in the

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The Sentinel photo by Aimee M. Henderson

Here, students identify kale and draw what they observe.

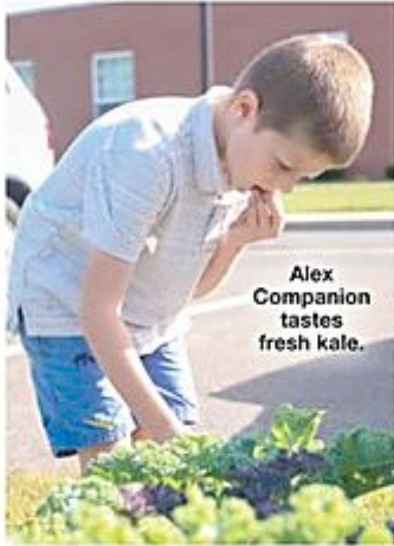
First graders gather at the school's community garden for a lesson in kale.



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12th grade, joined their teacher Ms. Levy with educating four classrooms of first graders about growing their own food and more specifically – kale.

Levy said her high school students are learning about food production currently, and thought it would be a great opportunity for them to pass on their knowledge to a younger group. She said the Swift River Community Garden sprouted kale this



Alex Companion tastes fresh kale.

year, which offered up a great chance for the students to see food come right from the ground and go right to their tummies through a fresh sample.

Getting the children to pay attention to how things grow and how they too can grow food was a big part of the lesson, said Levy. She added, “cross grade partnerships” allow for more individualized attention because the high school students work closely with smaller groups of children. And, in the end the high schoolers “get to contribute in ways they never thought they would.”

Each first grade classroom that participated was split into eight smaller groups, which were led by high school students. During that time the students received a journal for taking notes about what they learned and observed about kale. They also learned the proper way to water plants and why it’s important to pull weeds from a garden.

The framework for the lesson was modeled off STEM learning, which is based on the idea of educating students in four specific disciplines – science, technology, engineering and mathematics – in an interdisciplinary and applied approach.

Levy said, “STEM gets kids up and active and doing and facing something right in front of them.”

Grace Marble, a first grader at SRE, said she learned a lot about watering the plants as well as how kale is a food you can grow and eat.



Aidson Piadade waters kale during a special learning session.

“I loved it!” she said of the sample she tried. Though she added that she’s tasted before.

Marble hopes to get in the garden more at home and grow tomatoes, beans and kale. She said it’s important to know how to grow your own food.

BHS seniors Lauren LeBlanc and Lyndsey Fleming were two of the high schoolers who aided in the lesson. They both agreed that the program was fun, but at the same time, important.

“They look up to us and are learning from us,” said Fleming.

“It seems like they pay more attention to us,” added LeBlanc.

Both girls were surprised how many of the first graders liked the taste of kale, though they did say some weren’t impressed.

“Some of them spit it out,” said LeBlanc with a chuckle.

For LeBlanc and Fleming, working with the first graders was just a snapshot of what their future holds. Both want to work with children in their profession.