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## Cleveland, Ohio Schoolchildren Benefit from Start of Veggie U Program

### **MEDIA ALERT** January 12, 2016

**WHAT:** The Veggie U classroom garden program is underway in over 70 CMSD elementary schools, including all second grade classes and dozens of special needs classrooms. This unique program was designed to teach children about nutrition and the importance of making wise food choices, as well as introduce them to the concepts required in state science standards. Veggie U's attitude surveys show that participation in the program increases the likelihood that vegetables will remain a healthy choice in the students' diet.

**WHEN (PHOTO/video OPS):** Over the course of the next 5 weeks (Jan 11- Feb 12), the children will begin planting, tending, and eventually harvesting a mini crop of vegetables right in their classroom, as well as tending to the class worm farm. This makes for great photo/video opportunities, as does the Feast Day, which occurs at the end of the 5-week curriculum.

**WHY:** Veggie U is dedicated to increasing children's awareness of healthy food options, and teaching them how real food reaches their plate. We believe children who are exposed to growing their own food are more likely to include vegetables in their diet. Our national non-profit organization supplies Classroom Gardens and a standards based, five-week science program to elementary and special needs students. Created by a team of educators, a physician, and a nutritionist, over 6500 classroom gardens have grown in 36 states (impacting over 160,000 children). Veggie U is made available to classrooms through private donations, corporate support, and grants.

**HOW:** Some funding for the Veggie U classroom garden program in CMSD was provided by a variety of funders, including Scott Kuhn/Kuhn Family Foundation, Parker Hannifin, The Abington Foundation, and The Char and Chuck Fowler Foundation. Over \$80,000 is needed to provide the program in Cleveland this year.

**DETAILS:** Veggie U's Classroom Garden program was inspired by chefs and farmers, and developed through the volunteer efforts of a nutritionist, doctor and local educators. The team recognized that children would greatly benefit from understanding the connection between what they consume and how that food is grown. Educating children in an engaging, hands-on way helps them to learn. Veggie U's science-based program offers a seed-to-planting-to-harvest experience. A complete garden is provided along with a comprehensive teacher's lesson manual written to cover state and national science standards. The benchmarks for these standards are included at the beginning of each lesson so that teachers can integrate them into existing curriculum.

In addition to a hands-on, scientific approach to learning about plants and their components, the Veggie U curriculum incorporates extensive journal activities, mathematics, language arts and fine arts, providing an interactive and enjoyable way for students to study these core concepts. The classroom lessons include studies of soil, composting, planting, plant anatomy, and nutrition. The students also care for a worm farm, raise a mini "crop", and celebrate the end of the program with a vegetable Feast Day. Visit [www.VeggieU.org](http://www.VeggieU.org) more information on our program.

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