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Capital District Community Gardens' Produce Project Involves Troy High Students in 'Vermicomposting Experimental Classroom Education Program'

*Educating Youth about Waste Solutions and Composting School Cafeteria Scraps
to Benefit Urban Agriculture Project*

Capital District Community Gardens' Produce Project is partnering with Troy High School to involve forty students in the 'Vermicomposting Experimental Classroom Education Program,' a new project designed to educate youth about food waste management systems. Students enrolled in 'Food, Land and People,' 'Living Environment' and 'Environmental Science,' all of which are elective science classes taught by Troy High teacher Seth Cohen, are collecting food scraps from the school's cafeteria, composting them in bins in their classroom and distributing compost to CDCG's urban farm on 8th Street in Troy.

CDCG's Produce Project is a year-round urban farm, job and life skills training program for underprivileged youth. Student trainees earn a stipend and receive a harvest share in exchange for tending crops on three acres of urban farm land and selling them at local markets. In addition to increasing awareness about alternative waste management methods, the 'Vermicomposting Experimental Classroom Education Program' is intended to strengthen and build lasting relationships between Troy High School teachers, the entire student body, neighbors and CDCG.

CDCG's Produce Project Educator, Tolu Fashoro, visited students in the classroom earlier this month and presented a lesson on the process and benefits of vermicomposting. Students worked with Fashoro to populate the compost bins they set up in their classroom with red wiggler worms, which are now working to break down the food they collect from the school's cafeteria. Students were instructed on how to manage the bin's environment to maximize the production of castings (harvestable compost.) Students monitor the bins daily, taking note of which foods the worms prefer to eat, the number of harvestable castings, temperature, oxygen levels and the rate at which worms are reproducing. This week, the students took a field trip to The Produce Project to see, first hand, how their compost will benefit the environment, local agriculture and the community it supports.

The 'Vermicomposting Experimental Classroom Education Program' is a pilot project, funded in part by a \$5,000 grant from the SyracuseCoE Center for Sustainable Community Solutions through their Mini-Grants Program for Mitigating Pollution and a \$10,000 grant from the Bender Scientific Fund of the Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region. Research gathered by CDCG and Troy High School during the program will be used to investigate the possibility of a larger scale vermicomposting project that would involve several restaurants and neighbors in the collection and processing of food waste.

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Capital District Community Gardens is a 38 year old nonprofit organization that nourishes healthy communities with nearly 50 Community Gardens, The Veggie Mobile, The Healthy Convenience Store Initiative, The Produce Project, Squash Hunger and more.
