

# Planting for the Future

**U**nder a bright Kansas spring sky, little hands sowed big ideas about good nutrition when they planted an edible schoolyard at the

Hiersteiner Child Development Center on May 8.

Gardeners, ages 1 to 6, planted tomatoes, sugar snap peas and melons in a hoophouse, an unheated greenhouse, as a way to harvest healthy attitudes toward food choices and local, sustainable agriculture.

“Research in the Berkeley, Calif., Unified School District indicates that when children see where foods grow and help to plant and care for them, they are more likely to eat them,” said Sara McElhenny, program director, HCDC.

Lindy Robinson, assistant dean, design and hospitality management, and David A. Smith, associate professor, hospitality management, researched the Chez Panisse Foundation’s school lunch initiative, a district-wide effort in Berkeley, Calif., to create healthier meals, and then developed the JCCC edible schoolyard in order to yield produce for use in HCDC’s school lunches.

“Culinary programs are obligated to be involved in the Slow Food movement because we can make a difference in the eating habits of young people, habits that stay with them for life,” Robinson said.

Smith says it will be a three-season garden with children planting crops like broccoli and cabbage in the fall. The hoophouse (also called a high tunnel) is a low-cost greenhouse with UV plastic covering to extend the growing season. In addition to the learning potential for children, Smith says he hopes they have fun getting in the dirt, watching plants grow and helping with the harvest.

On hand for the ceremony were donors and dignitaries including Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

“Kansans feed the country. We feed the world. And having a project that links that history of Kansas with a notion that food preparation should be healthier is visionary,” Sebelius said.

Funding for the edible schoolyard is provided by Dr. George Semb and Patricia Semb and the Sunflower Foundation. 🌻



Gov. Kathleen Sebelius gives tree planting directions to (left to right) Kylie Brewer, Kobee Austria and Carson Couch as Allyson Moyer, lead teacher, Rain Forest room, assists.



Don Perkins, director, Budget and Auxiliary Services, displays another asset – performing on his acoustical guitar before the planting of the edible schoolyard.