

From the Ground Up

GROWING CHILDREN'S EXCITEMENT ABOUT VEGETABLES

“Some of these children have never seen vegetables outside of a supermarket,” says Denine Rogers, describing students at

Dorsett Shoals Elementary School in Douglasville, Ga. That changed when they brought an abandoned community garden back to life—and grew a new love for veggies in the process.

The project began in January 2011 and the school's foodservice manager invited Rogers, a registered dietitian, master gardener and former school foodservice manager herself, to help. Rogers taught students about the importance of eating grains, fruits and vegetables every day, and asked the children to select a medley of vegetables to plant. (Green beans and peas were

among their favorites.) School staffers and local businesses donated time as well, along with supplies—gloves, shovels, pots, soil, seeds and gardening sticks.

The children shared all gardening responsibilities and eventually reaped a bountiful harvest. In August, the program received a Fuel Up to Play 60 grant from the National Dairy Council and the National Football League to continue the school garden program.

“The garden gave the kids a chance to sit down with their parents and talk about nutrition,” says Rogers. “One parent told me, ‘Now my son wants his own garden.’ When I heard that, I knew I'd done my job.”

“One parent told me, ‘Now my son wants his own garden.’ When I heard that, I knew I'd done my job.”



Registered dietitian Denine Rogers works with students at Dorsett Shoals Elementary School's community garden. PORTRAIT BY DEBORAH LLEWELLYN WHITLAW

DENINE ROGERS, RD, LD, began her path to dietetics during high school when she served as a summer intern for what was then called Kraft General Foods. She went on to earn her nutrition degree from Howard University. She says her mother had always been interested in dietetics and encouraged her to pursue the profession.

To read more inspirational stories—and submit your own—visit FoodandNutritionMag.org/inspire.