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### **LIBERTY'S KITCHEN LAUNCHES SCHOOL GARDEN AT CROCKER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**



**New Orleans, LA** – Commemorating National Farm to School Month, Liberty's Kitchen launched their first "Liberty's School Garden" at Crocker College Prep. The official garden groundbreaking by Liberty's Kitchen and project supporters Instar Farm and Sysco took place on October 25<sup>th</sup> with the installation of vegetable beds.

The Liberty's School Garden is one of three farm-to-school initiatives in development by Liberty's Kitchen, which serves 3,500 meals a day in partner schools through the School Nutrition Program. A central goal of the program is to enable children and their families to make better food choices and learn about the food cycle.

Other initiatives include increasing local produce procurement, which has mutual benefit for local farmers and the school community, as well as a nutrition education component that will be piloted at Crocker College Prep. Through a weekly "Liberty's Kitchen Lab," staff members will work with students to create meals and learn about nutrition using produce harvested from the Liberty's School Garden.

Nutrition and Sustainability Coordinator Selma Nunez explained, "I will be working with middle school scholars in a Kitchen Lab along with a Garden Lab, now that we have the raised beds and the citrus orchard. This will help the kids understand the process of farm-to-school."

Youth Development Program trainees will assist in garden maintenance as part of their training education, and employees from Sysco will work as volunteers under the guidance of Instar Farms.

Nutrition Assistant and YDP alumni Asia Williams added, "I have seen the students get so excited about the garden. They like to help out and help us build the garden beds."

Executive Director Dave Emond commented, "I'm so proud of our team and so grateful to our partners for making this vision a reality. Food access and food justice have become a central part of our mission to provide pathways for New Orleans youth to create and achieve their vision of success. The Kitchen Lab and Garden Lab are thoughtful, significant steps forward for our mission."

Since 2009, Liberty's Kitchen has served more than 650 youth, investing in their potential to achieve their vision of success. The organization has more than 40 active employment partners throughout New Orleans, all of whom are committed to providing opportunity and training through externships and employment. In addition, Liberty's Kitchen is a local leader in providing high quality, great-tasting, and nutritious food to children attending local public charter schools. Since 2010, the organization has prepared and served well over 2 million meals, raising the standard of nutrition and helping New Orleans school children excel in the classroom and beyond. Liberty's Kitchen operates a retail café at 300 N. Broad Street and a retail cafeteria at 1615 Poydras St. The organization provides a wide range of catering services from office lunches to wedding receptions.

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