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NEW BEDFORD

Greenhouse grows enthusiasm at New Bedford's Carney Academy



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Students, Carney Academy staff and representatives of the Marion Institute's Grow Education program admire the refurbished greenhouse the program made possible at the New Bedford school. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By John Garcia
Contributing writer

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NEW BEDFORD — Carney Academy fourth-grader Ahnay Adams led a group of visitors up the school's stairs, her voice full of enthusiasm as she told them facts about plants.

Within a few moments, the group would see the source of her excitement as she brought them into Carney's newly restored greenhouse.

After nearly half a year of hard work, the room was finally ready for the spotlight as it was unveiled for the public at a recent grand opening event.

The restoration project was conducted by the Marion Institute's Grow Education Program, which works with New Bedford public schools to create community gardens.

"Having a community school based garden at every single public school in the city of New Bedford will allow for there to be an access point for healthy food and community-based education in every single neighborhood," Grow Education Program Manager Zoe Hansen-DiBello said.

The greenhouse had fallen out of use in recent years, suffering from such problems as excess dust and a damaged floor. "This (floor) was popping up tiles, it was in a hard condition, a hard

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state," Hansen-DiBello said.

After forming a partnership with the school in the fall of 2014, Grow Education began to rehabilitate the space in the spring of 2015, a process that included replacing the floor.

The new floor was donated by ProGroup Contracting, a licensee of CertaPro Painters, Fairhaven.

Local artist Tracy Silva Barbosa was commissioned to create a mural on the room's walls, a task she said took about 80 hours to complete.

"This was created morning, afternoon, and evening in the heat of the summer," Hansen-DiBello said.

A depiction of the New Bedford Harbor, Barbosa's mural features a flock of birds soaring through a gold colored skyline.

Barbosa noted that the drawing was designed to create an inviting atmosphere, using gold to accentuate the light within the room.

"I wanted to create something that would cause the children who are out in the space to peer in through these windows and say 'I want to be in there, what is that?'" she said. "This is honoring where we live."

Several students from the school helped cultivate plants in the greenhouse, which include green beans, avocado, cabbage, aloe, jade and cilantro.

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voiced joy that her school now has an active greenhouse. "It feels pretty great," she said.

Principal Karen Treadup said the children loved participating in the project. "The kids have enjoyed it," she said. "They enjoyed getting their hands dirty playing with the worms."

Hansen-Dibello noted that additional work on the greenhouse remained to be completed.

Carpenter Paul Trenouth will contribute a custom trellis that will become part of the mural. In addition, plant beds will be added outside of the building in the spring.

Hansen-Dibello said that just before year's end, eight of New Bedford's public schools had gardens, with the number increasing to 12 by the spring. Grow Education's goal is to eventually bring a garden to every single public school in the city, she said.

More information on the Grow Education program can be found at marioninstitute.org/programs/grow-education.

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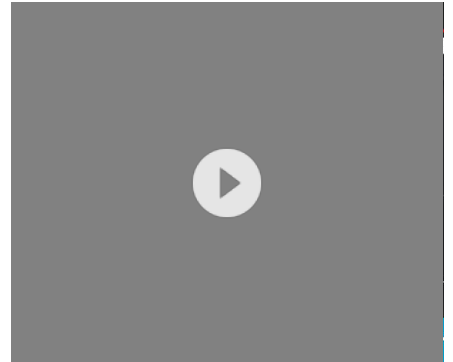
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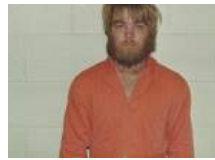
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