

GESU CHURCH

17180 OAK DRIVE

DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48221

Contact: Michelle Balsam, Gesu science teacher
(313) 863-4677 Fax (313)862-4395
balsam@comcast.net- <http://gesuschool.udmercy.edu>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DETROIT CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WINS SCIENCE GRANT

Detroit, Michigan, March 10, 2006 + Gesu Elementary School has been awarded a \$10,000 Toyota Tapestry Grant in the "Environmental Science" category. This spring, Gesu students in 4th, 5th, and 6th grades will create an urban garden in the Gesu Community Green, a parish-sponsored playground open to the community. Students will grow the vegetables and spices needed for salsa + tomatoes, peppers, onions, and other good things. They will fertilize their gardens with compost partially made from lunch leftovers munched by a colony of earthworms. In the fall, the students will harvest their crop and can their own salsa. Then they will celebrate by preparing a fiesta for their parents and the wider community. In this first year they will also plant a variety of berries so that they can make home-made jams and jellies in the 2007 school year.

The National Science Teachers Association and Toyota Motor Sales USA collaborate each year to sponsor this very competitive grant. The gardens the grant makes possible will become an ongoing part of the students' learning. For example, the garden "curriculum" incorporates:

- . science + plant life cycles, insects good and bad, and types of soil;
- . math + charting plant growth, calculating garden yield, analyzing data from year to year;
- . social studies + the networks of people, skills, and services required to bring food to their tables, and gardening both as a profitable occupation and a leisure activity;
- . English + comprehending what they read and writing and speaking to other people.

Most importantly, the students will have responsibility for a project that comes full circle, from seed-in-the-earth to table, over a period of years.

Michael Neumann, the executive director of the River Raisin Institute, a nonprofit organization which promotes sustainable living practices, helped design the project and will continue as a technical advisor. He says, "The garden is going to be a good opportunity for people to learn about traditional agriculture. It's also going to promote bio-diversity because we intend to use heirloom seed varieties. The kids will have fun, but they will also have an opportunity to relate with the earth, to improve it through environmental science, and to learn good nutrition. And they will create something beautiful. I can't wait to get started."

Gesu Elementary School is part of the Detroit Archdiocesan school system and has served the families of Gesu Parish and Northwest Detroit for 80 years.

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