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**Villa Maria School**  
salutes Christine Santonella

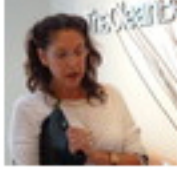
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## Feed Me Fresh Offers Lasting Education

by **Brittany L. Morgan** Today

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Each week teachers select a student recipe to cook for their class.

Photo Credit: **Brittany L. Morgan**

MOUNT KISCO, N.Y. - During its 40 years, the Mount Kisco Child Care Center has dedicated itself to enriching the lives of the children of Mount Kisco both educationally and nutritionally.

For several years, the center has been teaching a curriculum based around the "farm to table" movement. The "Feed Me Fresh: Garden to Table" nutrition program is unique to the Mount Kisco Child Care Center, said Keri Reitman, Development Director.

"We have an on-site commercial kitchen with two chefs that prepare all the food that's served in the center fresh each day," she said.

The center feeds its children, teachers and staff each day keeping child nutritional needs in mind. It focuses on wholesome, locally sourced ingredients. As part of the center's curriculum, children learn how to grow and maintain their own garden bed.

"There are 1,000 feet of raised beds around the perimeter of the building," Reitman said. "In the spring, the children get to work with a farmer to choose which seeds they want to plant."

The children work out math problems to see how much their gardens might yield. They are also encouraged to research what types of foods will grow in this climate.

"The children actually get their hands dirty," Reitman said. "They physically put the seeds in the ground, they put popsicle sticks in the ground to label their plants and then they tend to those gardens, they weed them, water them and watch them grow."

The children harvest their gardens and are able to eat what they grew.

"We've had strawberries, tomatoes, cucumbers, beans. We even tried to grow corn," said Reitman "Each week students work with the chef to come up with recipes that incorporates what we're growing in the garden."

Thursdays are special at the center as teachers cook student recipes for the children to taste.

"The parents appreciate knowing that while their child is here, they are going to be served fresh, wholesome food and are taking away a lifetime of knowledge," said Reitman.

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