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**CONTACTS:**

***Sharon Lagasse, General Manager – Food and Nutrition, Lowell Public Schools***

[slagasse@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:slagasse@lowell.k12.ma.us)

978-674-2077

<http://www.lpsfarm2school.com>

***Francey Slater, Co-Founder – Mill City Grows***

[Francey@MillCityGrows.org](mailto:Francey@MillCityGrows.org)

978-455-2620

[MillCityGrows.org](http://MillCityGrows.org)

**LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOOD AND NUTRITION TEAM PARTNERS WITH MILL CITY GROWS FOR IN-SCHOOL HEALTHY FOOD INITIATIVES**

**Lowell celebrates National Farm to School month this October with fresh, locally grown produce featured in Lowell Public School district meals and snacks. The delicious local food continues year-round with Massachusetts' Harvest of the Month Program!**

[LOWELL, MA] – Students and faculty in Lowell Public Schools are enjoying an extra helping of delicious, locally grown produce through a partnership between *Lowell Public Schools Food & Nutrition Team* (LPSFN) and *Mill City Grows* (MCG). In recognition of Massachusetts' year-round Farm to School Harvest of the Month (HOTM) Program, lunch menus district wide will showcase a different locally grown fruit, vegetable, or seafood in an effort to increase students' exposure to fresh, seasonal foods. Partner activities presented by LPSFN and Mill City Grows include classroom and lunch time taste-tests PLUS visits from MCG's FoodCorps Service Team Members.

In addition to supporting local farmers and growers, Harvest of the Month initiatives enhance classroom education through hands-on learning related to food, health, agriculture, and nutrition. The month of October will be especially exciting as Lowell Public Schools joins thousands of educational facilities across the country to celebrate *National Farm to School Month*, a month-long opportunity for cafeteria staff, students, faculty, and Food and Nutrition staff to shine a spotlight on their school gardens, special menus, and healthy food curricula.

According to Sharon Lagasse, General Manager of Food and Nutrition at Lowell Public Schools, the goal of the Harvest of the Month Program is to increase students' exposure to seasonal foods.

“While the HOTM is added into the school menu so every student can enjoy them, we have learned that something magical happens when we allow a student to reject a food item in a safe environment,” says

Lagasse. “By allowing students to experiment with new foods in a supportive way, we are more likely to start conversations about why they like or dislike certain items. Hopefully, this will lead them to continue trying new foods.”

Mill City Grows Youth Education Program Manager Maggie Notopoulos agrees with Lagasse. “The Harvest of the Month Program is a great example of how youth are building their comfort levels with new food items,” she says. “It’s exciting to see them develop a deeper understanding of their food system and where their food comes from.”

Throughout the school year, Mill City Grows’ FoodCorps Service Members Haela Booth-Howe and Maddie Grant will be on site at Lowell’s Lincoln Elementary School and STEM Academy at the Rogers School to facilitate dynamic food education curriculum for students and faculty during the school day, including recipe-sharing, food preparation, fresh food samples and tastings, and planting and harvest activities in Lincoln and STEM school classrooms. FoodCorps Service Members will be supported by the Aramark Food and Nutrition Team at Lowell Public Schools.

“Haela and Maddie are doing tremendous work in their service schools connecting the youth with what’s on their plate in a deeper way than I’ve seen before,” says Notopoulos.

### **About Lowell Public Schools Food and Nutrition Department**

Lowell Public Schools Food and Nutrition Department is committed to creating healthier environments and communities by providing healthy foods and comprehensive nutrition and wellness education. The Lowell Public Schools Food Service staff looks forward to serving children nutritious, great-tasting menus that support their achievements in school and promote healthy lifestyles. *Aramark Education* is proud to work in conjunction with Lowell Public Schools to help nurture students’ well-being, improve their overall dining experience, and adopt healthy lifestyles by providing nutritious menus, innovative dining environments and wellness-based education and promotions. For more information, visit LPSFN at <http://www.lpsfarm2school.com> and follow them on [Facebook](#).

### **About Mill City Grows**

Since 2011, Mill City Grows has worked towards food justice in Lowell, Massachusetts, using the following strategies and programs: education in and out of schools, supporting community leadership through community gardens, increasing urban agriculture through urban farming, implementing a mobile market, and empowering people to produce their own food. Their Food Access and Food Education programs are rooted in the idea that a well-educated and well-resourced community will make healthier choices. Visit [MillCityGrows.org](http://MillCityGrows.org) to learn more, and follow MCG on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

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