

FALL 2013

# NARDIN

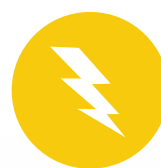
NARDIN TODAY: THE MAGAZINE FOR THE NARDIN ACADEMY COMMUNITY

## *Sustainable Nardin*

Taking action, building awareness,  
living our mission.



# *Sustainable* Nardin



**People.** **Food.** **Resources.** **Waste reduction.**



This fall has seen amazing changes in our dining hall and foodservice. The Academy started the 2013-14 school year with a Nardin-staffed kitchen, providing scratch-cooked food to our students.

Leading the way to deeper engagement with this vital portion of school life are Leslie Johnson, Nardin vice president for finance and operations, and project manager, Beyond Green Partners' Greg Christian, a chef trained at the Culinary Institute of America, an entrepreneur, and a national expert in sustainability in educational food programs.

Johnson and Christian, in conjunction with the kitchen staff, plan the menu, sourcing ingredients from as many local providers as financially feasible, and carefully monitor energy usage, with the goal of becoming a zero-waste operation. And it is all part of a larger plan, called Sustainable Nardin.

The academy's strategic goals, adopted in 2012, affirm that we are committed to

maximizing student potential, engaging students in the world, and creating a dynamic Nardin community. Sustainable Nardin nimbly, neatly and most importantly, organically melds these goals, creating a blueprint for the future.



**Sustainable Nardin is essentially about the continuation of Nardin's traditions; traditions that were begun over 155 years ago by the Daughters of the Heart of Mary. We teach and learn from each other about our world, ourselves and others; how we can help and be a part of community; how to be mindful and caring.**

As the symbols in the Sustainable Nardin logo represent, our sustainable focus is first on people. People and community are the literal heart and soul of Nardin. Without them—each other, you—there simply is no Nardin.



**Food—its production, acquisition, preparation, consumption, and ultimate effects on our bodies, our health and the earth—is the next focus.**



Greg Christian

The switch to a self-operated kitchen and dining hall was the culmination of a two-year exploratory process. Nardin's initial investment included hiring a chef, sous chef and staff who procure, prepare and serve food in ways that are ever more local, cost-effective, nutritious and pleasurable, as well as upgrading kitchen equipment to support their scratch-cooked efforts. And, with the support of parents, teachers, trustees and alums, we are extending these literal changes into curriculum and lifestyle changes. (See below for timeline.)

## THE PATH TO **CHANGE**

### 2008

- SEPT. Green initiative rolled out to faculty and staff and board.
- NOV. Parent surveys conducted. Results indicate that parents will pay slightly more for healthier, fresher lunches.

### 2009

- JAN. First meeting of healthy eating committee.
- SEPT. Healthier snacks and beverages substituted in cafeteria. Parents and students are happy!

### 2010

- SEPT. Bottle filling stations installed around the school to reduce waste.
- SEPT. Began changing cooking processes to determine feasibility of cooking at necessary scale.
- SEPT. Student council members participate in tastings snacks for vending machines.

### 2011

- FEB. Five Points Bakery invited to conduct toast-tasting. Their whole-grain cinnamon rolls are served to high school students.
- Fresh fruit introduced in the cafeteria.



### 2012

- APR. Healthier snack and beverage vending machines introduced.



- JAN. Assessed and visited farms to explore vendors/suppliers.
- MAR. All grades 1-3 students visit the bakery; baker Kevin Gardner also visits classrooms and conducts cooking workshops.
- APR. Greg Christian and his staff conduct tasting for a panel of students from grades 4-12. Scratch-made dishes include lentils with coconut milk, egg strada, chicken nuggets, chicken squash melt, oatmeal, and green beans crispy shallots. Kids give big thumbs up.
- APR. A week of tracking waste is conducted in cafeteria—of both purchased and bag lunches. Collected and measured compostable, non-compostable garbage. That's a lot of garbage!
- MAY The board of trustees approved adapting the existing Nardin kitchen for roll-out of scratch-cooked lunch program in Sept. 2013.
- MAY To garner excitement for the program, Christian and Institutional Advancement invite a group of friends of Nardin—including current and alum parents, alums, trustees and faculty—to attend the first of several intimate scratch-cooked dinners served at Nardin House.
- MAY Christian embarks on networking and community outreach, gathering information about suppliers, farmers, composting, etc. from



contacts at the University at Buffalo, Buffalo State/ Campus House, the Lexington Co-op, as well as through current parent Mark Hutchinson and other community partners.

- JULY Gently-used equipment purchased to get kitchen ready for scratch-cooked lunch!
- AUG. Kitchen staff hired. Kismet reigns when Julie Jendresky Levin '88 is hired as head chef. Welcome back to Buffalo—and to your alma mater!
- SEPT. From day one, the food has been welcomed, and we have sold record number of lunches.
- SEPT. Guest chef Mark Hutchinson's food is a hot ticket. Nardin featured on WKBW with Hutch and Christian here cooking up a storm.
- OCT. Chef Paul Jenkins creates a fall menu; cider-brined roasted chicken with apple chutney, pumpkin bisque and arugula salad. Board members on site for a meeting try a taste....and LOVE IT!!!
- OCT. Nardin is featured on the cover of the Buffalo News' Refresh section.
- NOV. Third guest chefs, Sarah and Eliza Schneider from Merge Restaurant are scheduled ...AND BEYOND!





Future investment will include a complete kitchen and dining hall renovation and expansion.

**Next comes resources and waste reduction. Our students are learning with practical application how to take care of the environment. During each lunch period, garbage is separated: food, paper and liquids for composting, plastic and foil, etc. for recycling. Students are gaining an integrated understanding of the cycles of the earth, of food, of garbage, of energy, of their bodies.**

"Without attention to where the food comes from, resource allocation and waste reduction, you cannot be truly sustainable," said Christian. Since being introduced to the Nardin community, Christian and his staff, who are based in Chicago, have spent weeks and weeks in Buffalo, helping set up the kitchen, and dining hall, and establishing community partnerships.

Sustainability hinges on awareness: of resources, how much we use of water, electricity, the sun, and our own energy in helping others.

**Sustainability also requires curiosity and persistence: How can we reduce our usage? How can we maximize, and not waste, resources?**

The schools already had in place some

great "teaching tools" that function as laboratories—a solar panel array, the Elementary School butterfly environment, and the Montessori gardening/circular lunch program. (As part of their curriculum, Montessori children grow some of their food; their lunches from home are packed in reusable containers, and any waste is brought home so that parents are aware of what/how much of their lunches they eat. They are taught and practice eating together gracefully and courteously.)

The Sustainable Nardin blueprint further mandates integrating partnerships, collaborations and real-life activities into the food and dining experience.

A monthly guest chef program, designed to create and foster community awareness and collaborations, has already launched.

In September, Mark Hutchinson, owner of Hutch's restaurant, cooked and served lunch to our students. Hutchinson's son, Louis E '09, is an elementary school alum, and his two young daughters, Alessia and Elizabeth, attend the Montessori program.

Not to be outdone, Paul Jenkins, Hutchinson's partner in Tempo and Remington Tavern, was the second guest chef, cooking and serving a fall-themed menu, which was heartily received by kids and adults alike. Sarah and Eliza

Schneider, '00 and '03 respectively, who own the popular health-conscious restaurant Merge, served as guest chefs in November.

The curricular opportunities encompassed within Sustainable Nardin are vast, and dovetail with the integration of Catholic social justice tenets by which we strive to live.

Lessons of the dignity of farm and kitchen workers, those who grow, harvest, process and transport our food; lessons in grace and community—in the dining hall, milk is now served family style, and pitchers passed around by fellow students.

Care for God's creation is evidenced through tracking, monitoring and reporting waste production and reduction. With a move to ceramic plates and cups (reusable plastic for the younger students), we've immediately reduced paper waste.

Said Johnson, "We are extremely gratified by the enthusiastic response from our entire community to Sustainable Nardin. From our DHM trustees, to our 1st graders, it is a pleasure to see smiling faces sharing delicious nutritious food that has been prepared right in our own kitchen." ■

