

# Solway Elementary School

3300 Gillette Drive NW  
Bemidji, Minnesota 56601



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## Summary

Solway Elementary's school garden project is a cooperative effort of the Food Services Department working with students, staff, and other agencies. Students, parents and volunteers help maintain the garden during the summer months. They produce an abundance of food that is served in the school lunchroom.

## Photos



## Details

Solway Elementary School in Bemidji developed their school garden program in 2009. The large garden plot adjacent to the school provides an abundance of edible food products of which most are used in their school lunchroom program. The students do all of the planting, parents and volunteers are involved with students in the harvesting and their food service staff at the high school takes care of the processing and freezing. Solway Elementary has received great support from parents and community members who have committed to volunteering their time tending the garden while students are gone for the summer.

### Solway Elementary School Garden Article

*The Bemidji Pioneer, 4/11/2012*

This spring marks the third year students and others at Solway Elementary School will have the opportunity to plant seeds in their very own school garden. The garden, which is 50 feet by 60 feet in size, started after the school district received a grant from the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) through the Minnesota Department of Health. Since then, Marleen Webb, Food Services

Coordinator for the Bemidji School District, has written and attained numerous grants and has collaborated with several agencies and volunteers in order to keep the garden growing each year. Students begin each spring by starting seeds in the classroom. Towards the end of the school year, students plant their seedlings in the garden. In the summer, volunteers from the school and community tend the garden by weeding and harvesting what has been grown.

Most of the food from the garden goes to feed hundreds of students who participate in the school district's summer food program. What's left is incorporated into the fall school menu. Potatoes, carrots, radishes, lettuce, beans, squash, onions, cucumbers, tomatoes and more have been grown in the school's garden. Members of the local Go and Whoa Harness Club assisted in plowing the garden through the use of horses, which Master Gardener Mary Lou Marchand said was one of the most exciting steps in making the school garden. "We had the best time planting all the seeds," she said.

Deborah Dilley, Community Nutrition Educator with the University of Minnesota Extension, said she was particularly pleased to help Solway Elementary

start its school garden. "I know from experience kids love to eat what they grow," she said. "Children who are not big vegetable eaters will often times like the food that they grow. Or if they know it's coming from local farmers, they're much more likely to eat it." Plans are in the works, Dilley added, to have her spend more time in the lunchroom in schools next year to help educate students on the benefits of eating fresh, locally grown foods. "It's been a lot of work from a lot of people," Dilley said of the Solway garden, "but it's been a wonderful project and I see it growing.

**For more information contact:**

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