Community Champion Teaches City Kids to Garden to Stay Fit and Healthy

How do you get kids to eat healthy food? Teach them how to grow their own garden! That’s exactly what earned Jan McDonald the Community Champions award from the Greater Rochester Health Foundation. McDonald is the director of the Rochester Roots Organization and has been instrumental in expanding organic urban garden programs in the city schools. The program focuses not only on how to grow food without pesticides or herbicides in order to protect the environment, but how to prepare food to maintain its vitamins and nutrients.

More than 500 students and 27 teachers have tilled, planted, weeded and harvested these urban gardens and families who work in the garden receive healthy produce for their family table. McDonald’s goal is to help Rochester Roots open a community kitchen to help families understand how to make better use of produce that is in season.

MacDonald was selected as a Community Champion because she has gone the extra mile to help kids aged 2-10 stay healthy. Champions may be individuals or groups that go above and beyond their normal duties to successfully impact children’s nutrition and/or physical activity. For details on how to nominate a Community Champion, go to www.thegrhf.org and click on Community Champions. The Prevention of Childhood Overweight and Obesity in Monroe County, NY 2007 – 2017 Strategic Plan, which outlines the details of childhood overweight and obesity as its long-term health consequences also is available on the web site under Publications and Reports. The Community Champions Awards is one strategy within the Foundation’s prevention goal to reduce the prevalence of overweight and obesity, as measured by Body Mass Index, from 15% to 5% of Monroe County children ages 2-10 by 2017.

John Urban, president and CEO of GRHF states, “Many times we think of large formal programs as the sole opportunity to improve children’s health. However, it is these smaller acts of outstanding individuals that will make a great impact on the physical activity, nutrition and overall health of our children. The goal of the
Foundation is to recognize these efforts, and share their successes to inspire other people to be creative.

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