

COMMUNITY CORNER

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LOVING AND VALUING THE ENVIRONMENT



EXAMINING:
Raven
Williams,
EARTHCARE
Eco Kid ex-
amines the
mangrove
seedlings.

EARTHCARE ECO KIDS PLANT MANGROVES IN DOVER SOUND AND TOUR
THE AQUAPONICS FACILITY AT THE GARDEN OF THE GROVES ON GB

EARTHCARE staged a Mangrove planting event by the EARTHCARE Eco Kids and toured the Aquaponics facility at The Garden of The Groves on Grand Bahama on Saturday, May 21, 2016.

Students from Martin Town Primary, Sunland Baptist Academy, Freeport Primary, Freeport Gospel Chapel School, Freeport Bible Academy, St. Georges High School, Bishop Michael Eldon School, and Mary, Star of the Sea Catholic Academy attended.

Gail Woon, Founder of EARTHCARE and a Director of Save The Bays observed, "Climate change is quite possibly one of the most pressing issues of our time. Today's mangrove planting exercise reiterates to our students the importance of mangroves as carbon sinks, i.e. they absorb excess carbon dioxide produced by man's polluting activities.

"Salt marshes, mangroves and seagrass beds absorb large quantities of the greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it, thereby decreasing the effects of global warming. Today we planted mangroves at Dover Sound in the wetland, in an area that had new mangroves already thriving. Our students were very enthusiastic, in spite of the thick muddy ground they had to walk on.

"From Dover Sound, our eager group went to The Garden of The Groves where they met Aquaponics Operations Manager, Wayne Hall, who gave them a very informative tour of the active Aquaponics facility.

"Mr. Hall showed them the tilapia fish that are used in the closed system facility. He explained the methods used to grow the edible produce, tomatoes, strawberries, mint, grape and cherry tomato, basil, romaine, red leaf romaine, red leaf and green leaf lettuce, green onion and watermelon among others in the water based system. Our students listened with rapt attention."

Wayne Hall added, "The Aquaponics facility at The Garden of The Groves, when completed, will encompass a total of 10,000+ sq. ft. and will be the largest commercial aquaponics facility in The Bahamas, specifically designed to be a public demonstration system.

"It may also be the largest and only public demonstration system in the Caribbean. At The Garden of The Groves the Aquaponics farm is a working model of sustainable food production wherein plant and animal agriculture are integrated and recycling of nutrients and water filtration are linked. The waste products of one biological system serve as nutrients for a second biological system. The fish waste products are used to create the nutrients that grow the plants.

"The integration of fish and plants result in a poly-culture that increases diversity and yields multiple products requiring no fertilizers or pesticides. By using renewable energy solutions you reduce the environmental footprint and its impact, lowering costs and thereby providing less expensive, fresh produce for the local consumer marketplace."

Requal Belle-Smith, EARTHCARE Eco Kids Facilitator added, "I think that the work that we do with EARTHCARE Eco Kids is an important one, in that it teaches our kids to love and value our environment. When we take care of the earth, she in turn cares for and provides for us.

"The opportunity the kids had to plant mangroves, I'm sure was a memorable experience. We, as adults, often complain that the youth don't get outside enough, well yesterday they did! They were deep in it.

"The aquaponics facility is the ideal example of the conservation message - Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. They have shown us how to reduce the amount of both water and space compared to traditional farming. They recycled the waste from the fishes and coconut husk to grow produce and then reused those same husks later. There are even future plans to recycle the by-products of the fileted fish, to make food to feed the fishes that help operate the system! I was greatly impressed."

The activities were made possible with the help of our faithful driver, Duane Brown from H. Forbes Charter & Tours, the Kevin Tomlinson Academy, Requal Belle-Smith, EARTHCARE Eco Kids Facilitator, Erika Gates, The Garden Café, and of course, Wayne Hall, Aquaponics Operations Manager.

The EARTHCARE Eco Kids, who worked hard planting the mangroves and learning about Aquaponics, include: Raven Williams, Patrick Bain, Shakada Hutson, Patiquea Bain, Tyler Riley, Keon Placide, Nathanael Smith, Demari Clarke, Jamarr John, Annisah Charlton, Sarah Gardiner and EARTHCARE Eco Kids Team Leaders: Tristan Rampersad, Havana Gibson, Savanna Gibson, Angelina Rahming, and Samia Rampersad.

• Contributed by Gail Woon

EARTHCARE Eco Kid, Patrick Bain at The Garden of The Groves Aquaponics Tour.



GAIL WOON, Founder of EARTHCARE and a Director of Save The Bays explains the importance of mangroves in mitigating climate change.



PROPAGULES: Mangrove Propagules (seedlings) ready for planting by EARTHCARE Eco Kids.



AQUAPONICS: EARTHCARE Eco Kids feel the tilapia at the Aquaponics facility at the Garden of the Groves.