

## Frances Rivetti

Freelance Writing and Public Relations 707 477 8397 francesrivetti@comcast.net

### *Press Release*

#### Petaluma-Based Barbara's Bakery (Via PEF) Funds Nine Years of School Gardens As Elementary School Students Appeal to Nation's First Lady for Recognition and Support

For immediate release: June 8th, 2009

Petaluma, CA: If the Nation's First Lady responds to a big, bundle of handwritten letters penned by Petaluma elementary school students and were to pay a visit to any one of a variety of the city's schools, she would be met with a wealth of horticultural knowledge and hands-on experience in how to make the most of a number of flourishing teaching gardens.

For First Lady, Michelle Obama famously planted fruit and vegetable seedlings in the new White House Garden this spring, assisted by a group of Fifth Graders from a Washington D.C School, inspiring over 300 students at Valley Vista and McKinley Elementary Schools to write her in request of recognition for their efforts here in Sonoma County.

Thanks to generous, on-going, annual PEF grants funded by community-minded, Petaluma-based Barbara's Bakery, numerous schools throughout the city are already well under way with a 'White House' trail of sustainable, healthy lifestyle lessons being learned in a wide range of well-established teaching gardens.

*"We're delighted to help support so many otherwise under-funded school gardens here in Petaluma,"* says spokesperson for Barbara's Bakery, Jacquie Perlmutter, pictured with students at Grant Elementary School Learning Garden.

The goal at Grant is to enrich math, plant science and health education curriculums through 'green' use of the Learning Garden.

2008/2009 school-year garden grants represented year nine in a generous, 10-year \$50,000 commitment by Barbara's Bakery via PEF. Schools which have benefitted are: Bernard Eldredge, Casa Grande HS, CG Native Plant Nursery, Grant, Mary Collins, McNear, Penngrove, Petaluma JH, Petaluma HS, St. Vincents HS, Two Rock, Valley Vista and Wilson.

As with the White House Garden, 600 pounds of last year's excess seasonal produce from St. Vincent de Paul High School's innovative PEF funded Victory Garden was donated to Petaluma's needy through Petaluma Bounty and the Petaluma Ecumenical Project. The Barbara's Bakery Grant for 2009-2010 will fund the relocation and major expansion of the garden to provide more produce to meet ever-growing demand. The school's kitchen coordinator will utilize produce to involve student gardeners in cooking classes. Latin class students have designed labels with scientific names of plants and the Art department is designing T-shirts for the Garden Club. Theology teachers plan to utilize the garden for thoughtful meditation for faculty and students.

Bernard Eldredge Elementary School's perfectly contained learning garden is based on the Spanish Mission gardens of early California. Native plants and grapevines thrive throughout the year on a sustainable drip system, as students learn which plants, fruits and vegetables thrive in this environment. This year's PEF grant funded by Barbara's Bakery will provide funding for a Redwood Tree Fairy Ring and an orchard of fruit trees.

*"Without the financial support of grants from Barbara's Bakery through PEF, the creation and ongoing development of our wonderful mission garden would have been an impossibility,"* says Jay Bushey, Upper Grade Teacher, Bernard Eldredge Elementary School, Petaluma

Coordinator for Petaluma School District Gardens, currently funded by the non-profit SHAKE Foundation (Support Healthy, Active Kids in Education is a Petaluma Elementary Schools fund raising development task focused on providing total health for children in the Petaluma Elementary School district), is Vanessa Passarelli. It was Passarelli who spearheaded the letter writing campaign to the White House.

*“Students were not asking for funding, but merely to make the First Lady aware of the tremendous efforts taking place here in Petaluma to teach sustainable gardening in schools,”* said Passarelli. *“Reading the letters brought tears to my eyes.”*

-ends-

*Petaluma Educational Foundation, 200 Douglas Street, Petaluma, Ca 94952*

*PEF Director, Janet Ramatici 707 778 4632 [janet@pefinfo.com](mailto:janet@pefinfo.com)*

*Vanessa Passarelli: [vep9@hotmail.com](mailto:vep9@hotmail.com)*

*Jacque Perlmutter, Barbara’s Bakery Brand Manager, Weetabix North America*

*707 283 0427 [jperlmutter@BarbarasBakery.com](mailto:jperlmutter@BarbarasBakery.com)*

*Media Contact, Frances Rivetti 707 477 8397*

*[francesrivetti@comcast.net](mailto:francesrivetti@comcast.net)*