

***Food Is Elementary* in Trumansburg**
Hayden Brainard, TCSD Foundation

Food is Elementary is a program of the Food Studies Institute (www.foodstudies.org), a national non-profit organization based in Trumansburg, NY focused on improving the health destinies of children through innovative hands-on food and nutrition education. This groundbreaking curriculum is widely regarded by nutrition & health professionals as one of the most effective approaches to encouraging students to eat foods that protect them from developing chronic diet-related diseases. The Food is Elementary (FIE) curriculum is the life-long work of Dr. Antonia Demas that she developed to educate children about nutrition by providing a positive experience of food and food preparation that is fun, hands-on and sensory-based. This work was the basis of her award-winning Ph.D. research study at Cornell University.

FIE has been taught in more than 3,000 schools across the United States and around the world and was re-introduced in the Trumansburg Elementary School five years ago with *all* teachers requesting the program each week. FIE has contributed to improving student nutrition education, developed a collaborative relationship with the cafeteria staff with plans to introduce FIE recipes in the lunch menu, and developed a garden and outdoor classroom with plans for a school orchard.

FEI does more than teach children about healthy eating – it improves their eating behaviors. It empowers them to make good food choices by providing accurate information about the link between food and disease prevention. This program also provides students with the life skill of food preparation through hands-on interactive experience. FEI has documented results from research-based studies include the development of preference for fruits, vegetables and whole foods over processed foods, reduced Body Mass Index, improved general health within weeks of educational intervention and parents choosing healthier foods due to the influence of their children, and introduction of curriculum foods into the school lunch program. Through the Food Studies Institute, Dr. Demas has raised funds from groups such as the Park Foundation, the TCSD Foundation and ShurSave, among many other sources. Unfortunately, full funding for the program for the 2013-2014 school year has not been achieved. Long-term funding is necessary for the program to be financially sustainable. The cost of the program includes the food educator salary(ies), materials and equipment, and ongoing curriculum development and training of food educators and cafeteria staff.

Recognizing the educational benefits of the Food is Elementary program and its overwhelming popularity with Trumansburg students and families, the TCSD Foundation has partnered with the Food Studies Institute to raise the additional funds necessary to continue the program for this school year and to make it a permanent part of student education in the Trumansburg Central School District, pre-K – 12th grade.

The TCSD Foundation will focus the immediate fundraising effort through its new crowdfunding website (<http://tcsdfoundation.peaksmaker.com/>). “Crowdfunding ... describes the collective effort of individuals who network and pool their money, usually via the Internet, to support

efforts initiated by other people or organizations. – *Wikipedia*. Beyond this crowdfunding effort, which will only last for 60 days, the TCSD Foundation together with the Food Studies Institute will continue to seek funds from other charitable foundations and businesses and other local and national resources to make the Food Is Elementary program permanent in Trumansburg, to extend it to the Trumansburg Middle School and High School, as well as other Tompkins County school districts, to create a national model for food education.

There will be a public forum on Monday, December 9th from 7-8pm in the Elementary School Auditorium to discuss the Food is Elementary program, this fundraising effort, and to answer questions. This crowdfunding effort requires the assistance and support of the entire community and Champions to be a success. Please consider being a Champion for this important cause, beginning by attending the community forum on Monday, December 9th at 7pm.