

L.A. Parker: Students learn about classic and modern farming at Isles event

By L.A. Parker, *The Trentonian*

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A city community garden became a giant outdoor classroom Thursday as local students gained hands on farm experience.

Garden Isles, Inc. hosted an annual Garden Plow at the Chestnut Avenue Community Garden with Howell Living History Farm horses and their handlers on site.

“It’s the greatest thing that has ever happened in my life,” Henry, a Robbins Elementary School third-grader said.

Students from Robbins and International Charter School enjoyed supervised help in controlling a plow pulled by Belgian Cross horses named Jack and Chester.

“I was kind of afraid one of the horses might kick me,” Robbins third-grader, Bradley admitted.

Robbins Elementary students said their teachers had assured a good time.

Students guided horses, learned about corn shelling, composting, beekeeping and enjoyed outdoor activities.

This year marked a special milestone in the history of the partnership between Isles and Howell Farm as they celebrated the 30th anniversary (to the exact date) of their first collaborative community garden plow.

“It’s an incredible day where school kids, farm staff, and community gardeners learn and work together to build a better future through food. We are proud to share this tradition with Howell Farm and the community,” Jim Simon, deputy director of Community Planning at Isles, said.

A Simon email noted, “The day happens quietly year after year, but carries a powerful significance that transcends generations as well as urban and rural landscapes.”

The Chestnut Avenue garden is the largest and oldest of more than 70 community and school gardens in Trenton.

The garden has hosted Howell Living History Farm plow teams for the majority of those 30 years.

Operated by the Mercer County Park Commission, the Farm demonstrates farming techniques used in the U.S. at the turn of the 20th century and in many parts of the world today.

L.A. Parker is a Trentonian columnist.