



MEDIA RELEASE

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STEPHANIE ALEXANDER SHOWCASES SCHOOL KITCHEN GARDENS AT PRAHRAN MARKET DURING DECEMBER

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation in conjunction with the Prahran Market will showcase the exciting Kitchen Garden Program that Stephanie Alexander has been championing into Victorian primary schools.

During the month of December parents and their children will be able to learn more about the program and will be invited to visit the stand at the Prahran market and learn about the growing, use and flavour of fresh seasonal produce.

Stephanie will be available to personally sign copies of her new book, *Kitchen Garden Cooking with Kids*. Each Saturday there will a cooking demonstration using recipes from the book.

Stephanie will be available to sign books between 12 noon and 1.30pm on the following dates during December:

Saturday December 9
Friday December 15
Saturday December 16
Thursday December 21
Friday December 22
Saturday December 23

Cooking demonstrations will be held at the stand between 11am and 12 noon on the following dates:

Saturday December 9
Saturday December 16
Saturday December 23

Media inquiries: Call Kate Quirke on 0419768582 or email info@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There is widespread agreement that the eating habits of Australian children are directly or indirectly leading to serious health problems. Proposed solutions and projects by government departments over the past 20 years have almost all involved negative messages about foods and have been ineffective. Obesity rates continue to rise. Many children continue to choose foods from an increasingly narrow range and many families increasingly rely on convenience foods and appear to ignore the importance of sharing meals with their children.

Stephanie Alexander has devoted the last five years to formulating the program and overseeing the best-practice model established in July 2001 at Collingwood College in inner Melbourne. Her commitment stems from a passionate belief that children will only develop positive attitudes towards a wide range of foods if they are introduced to the world of edible gardening, cooking and being with others around a table at an early age.

The reality is that children are constantly targeted by the advertising industry and the manufacturers of convenience food. If they receive no counter or balancing messages at home they are being left without any food education. As all children attend school until they are 15 it is suggested that it is at school that this education should be taking place.

The aim of the Kitchen Garden program is to pleurably engage and educate young Victorians in **growing, harvesting, preparing** and **sharing** delicious and healthy food in the belief that these skills and understandings are essential to the development of life-long joyful and healthy eating habits. The Foundation believes that behaviour is much more likely to change if an alternative is seen as pleasurable, positive and possible.

Each week at Collingwood College, 120 children across Grades 3 to 6 spend forty minutes in an extensive vegetable garden which they have helped design, build and maintain on the school grounds. They learn about plants, about seed saving, about water management, about compost and soil health and they also learn about the seasons, about plant varieties, about ripeness and about the connection between care in the garden and flavour on the plate.

They then spend one and a half hours each week in a modified home-economics kitchen preparing and sharing a variety of meals created from their produce.

The program employs two part-time specialist staff; a qualified gardener and a qualified cook. These two specialists promote pleasure in learning, rather than presenting the program as being primarily about 'health' or describing foods as being 'good for you'.

The link between the garden, the kitchen and the table is integral. The emphasis is on learning about food and about eating it. No part of the program can exist without the other. It is a compulsory part of the school's program for four years of a child's life.

In both the garden and the kitchen the students work co-operatively in small groups and expend considerable physical energy.

Stephanie Alexander established the Foundation in 2004 to seek funding for the replication of the operational model at Collingwood College in primary schools across Victoria. Stephanie is Chair of a eight-member board comprising education, philanthropy and business representatives. The Foundation is approved as a charity by the Australian Tax Office and its programs are supported by a range of grants from Foundations and private donations.

In 2005 the Foundation secured funding to introduce the Program into Nunawading and Yarrunga Primary Schools.

In 2006 the Victorian state Government announced part funding for the implementation of the Program to a further 40 primary schools across Victoria. The first 20 schools were recently selected and planning for these schools is well underway.