

Published October 24th, 2012

## St. Perpetua School's "Garden of Learning" Feeds a Café and Young Minds

*Submitted by Margot Dunphy*



Photo provided

generations - and one supports the other."

Café St Perpetua is open to the public from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. Friday mornings during the school year. On Friday, December 7 St. Perpetua School invites all incoming kindergarten-age children and their parents to get a taste of kindergarten, the Café and the Garden of Learning. Come for coffee at the Café between 8 and 9 a.m., followed by conversations with school staff and a visit to the Kindergarten classroom from 9 to 10 a.m. Space is limited. Pre-registration required: <http://stpparenteducation.eventbrite.com/>. Contact school Development Director Natalie Deininger for more information: [ndeininger@csdo.org](mailto:ndeininger@csdo.org).

The comforting scent of orange blossom and rosemary surrounds parents on a warm late summer morning as they sit listening to distant laughter of children. This hidden sanctuary is the "Garden of Learning" and has become a vital teaching tool at St. Perpetua School in Lafayette.

The garden is a labor of love for long-time Lafayette resident Monette Meo and her entourage of volunteers. Several years ago, Monette and a group of dedicated parents transformed this patch of dirt into a thriving bed of creativity and learning. "I want to give them the experience of an outdoor classroom," Monette says, "to teach the children that their food doesn't need to come from three thousand miles away."

To maintain this special place, Monette needed a fundraising vehicle. So, 10 years ago, she launched Café St. Perpetua. The garden produces key ingredients for menu items at the café, and students help create them. Established as the sole support for the garden, the garden feeds the café and the café feeds the garden. "The café was a financial tool to build and support the garden." Monette says, "Now it's a wonderful gathering place of different



St. Perpetua student Liv Drey smiles with Monette Meo. Photo Kerry Armistead

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