



GoggleWorks puts down *roots* for kids and the community

Art Center joins neighbor Lauer's Park Elementary for creative twist
to urban gardening

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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READING, PA – June 2nd, 2021 – GoggleWorks Center for the Arts, one of the country's largest interactive art centers, and Lauer's Park Elementary School, an innovative K-5 school, announced a new partnership called Art in the Garden. The project will allow GoggleWorks to apply its interactive art studio model to the

dynamic garden environment at Lauer's Park, serving school children and community residents alike.

For over a decade, Lauer's Park, a uniquely successful K-5 school, developed a network of garden classrooms, native plant habitats, greenhouses, beehives, outdoor ponds and waterfalls, and a fitness track. The effort was led by former principal Gordon Hoodak along with teachers, students, and volunteers. Hoodak's recent retirement as principal and the pandemic led the new principal Jasmin Sanchez-Lopez to explore creative ways to steward the gardens and reignite the program. And when it comes to creativity, she needed to look no further than the adjacent former goggle factory that GoggleWorks calls home.

"This partnership aligns with Lauer's Park's vision," said Jasmin Sanchez-Lopez, "where we provide students with the opportunities to discover dreams and the skills to make them come true. Through our gardens and this opportunity, students will be able to have real life application of what is learned in the classroom. It is so exciting to be redefining what classrooms look like."

Art in the Garden leaders are currently seeking a Garden Manager to lead educational programs and garden operations. Growing and food production will begin immediately, primarily in the publicly-accessible container garden on North 2nd Street. Beginning in the fall of 2021, the classroom gardens at the corner of Walnut and North 3rd Streets will activate, giving Reading School District students the opportunity to learn about sustainability, farming, nutrition, art-in-horticulture, and a variety of STEAM topics through GoggleWorks' After School Arts Program (ASAP). Two regionally-located, nationally-recognized organizations, Longwood Gardens and Rodale Institute, signed on as program partners.

"When some people think about art, they imagine expensive paintings or ancient sculptures behind glass," said GoggleWorks executive director Levi Landis. "This project reminds school kids and our community that art also happens in our gardens, kitchens, and public spaces. We believe that art, culture, and creativity should integrate with every step of community development and pair with every aspect of community life."

In 2018, GoggleWorks leaders joined a coalition of community organizations, including Lauer's Park, and residents aiming to serve city residents more significantly. Regular meetings with stakeholders culminated in a comprehensive plan to activate the neighborhood through partnerships, public placemaking, and cultural programs. The Wyomissing Foundation gathered key stakeholders to serve as a task force and granted seed funding to launch Art in the Garden.

Leaders said that the project also addresses issues surrounding food access and education. "Recently, our team has been focusing on how our mission can spill out of our walls, using art to solve major challenges in our community," said Landis. GoggleWorks leaders envision the program expanding art activities across the local food system, an approach they refer to as "farm-to-classroom-to-table." In addition to the educational programs, the project will provide nutrient-rich food to the community through monthly market events with Rodale Institute and ongoing "pick-and-take" activities. As Landis put it, "Our dream is to get school kids and residents creatively growing food in the gardens, learning about culinary arts and nutrition in our teaching kitchens, and distributing fresh food to the neighborhood, even in GoggleWorks' restaurant."

In the summer of 2022, Art in the Garden will host a Resident Horticulturist, an expansion to GoggleWorks' regular summer residency program. Similar to that visual art program, the Resident Horticulturist will live in Reading for 10 weeks, teaching and developing a capstone project. In this case, the capstone will be a permaculture installation, new garden plot, or other permanent green asset for the benefit of the community.

About GoggleWorks Center for the Arts

Located in downtown Reading, PA, GoggleWorks operates in a former goggle factory and is composed of 145,000 square feet of creative space. GoggleWorks offers year round arts education, including workshops, classes, and visiting artists; community outreach programs; a summer residency; youth programs and camps;

35 on-site studio artists; the Albert and Eunice Boscov theatre; three galleries for exhibitions; the Berks Launchbox maker space; and nine communal studios-hot glass, wood, printmaking, warm glass, metals, ceramics, photography, virtual reality, and now, the gardens. www.GoggleWorks.org

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