

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott  
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**October 24<sup>th</sup> is FOOD DAY!**

*~Healthy, Affordable and Sustainable Food for All ~*

**WALTON COUNTY**– The Florida Department of Health in Walton County (DOH-Walton) recognizes October 24, 2014 as Food Day. Food Day is a nationwide celebration of healthy, affordable, and sustainably produced food that promotes healthier diets and food education. Food Day inspires Americans to change their diets and our food policies. The typical American diet contributes to obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and other health problems. The costs of care for chronic diseases from obesity alone are expected to be \$34 billion over the next 17 years.

“Food Day is not just a day-long event, but an opportunity to make a permanent change that supports a more sustainable and healthy future,” stated Holly Holt, DOH-Walton Administrator.

Locally, DOH-Walton has joined with community partners to promote healthy eating habits. The Walton County School District supports school gardens that help supply students with an interactive learning experience to teach students the importance of growing, harvesting, and eating fruits and vegetables.

During the 2013-2014 school year, Freeport Elementary School fourth grade students and teachers created five classroom gardens that contained vegetables and fruits. The students harvested over 39 laundry baskets of red potatoes. The students and teachers then prepared and tasted the fruits and vegetables they produced. This helped the students understand the value and importance of growing fresh produce.

During the same school year, Freeport Middle School eighth grade students developed a school garden to align with the Project Based Learning (PBL) Activity, “Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger.” Students explored the concepts of sustainability, responsibility, the life-cycle, photosynthesis, and other agricultural topics. Garden construction began from grant allocations from the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF IFAS) Farm to School Program. This program was in collaboration with Christina Walmer, Farm to School District Coordinator for the Northwest Extension District, and Eddie Powell, the Master Gardener Coordinator with Walton County’s UF IFAS. A member of the Walton County UF IFAS Master Gardener Program, Mary Brewer, worked with other Walton County Master Gardeners and Mr. Appel, 8<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher, to help improve Freeport Middle School garden and greenhouse materials. The school garden is a constant work in progress and an enjoyable hands-on activity for students.

Through partnerships like the one with the Walton County School District, DOH-Walton hopes to help promote healthier lifestyles. Use Food Day, October 24<sup>th</sup>, to start eating a healthier diet and put your family’s diet on track. Ask your employer to use Food Day to announce a wellness policy or to participate in a community-supported agriculture program. Visit [FoodDay.org](http://FoodDay.org) to see what is already happening in your community, and get in on the conversation on social media.

For Walton County's University of Florida IFAS Extension Office information and current events, visit [walton.ifas.ufl.edu](http://walton.ifas.ufl.edu) and the Florida Department of Health's Healthiest Weight Florida Initiative visit [HealthiestWeightFL.com](http://HealthiestWeightFL.com).

The Department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts. Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](https://twitter.com/HealthyFla) and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/HealthyFla). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit [www.floridahealth.gov](http://www.floridahealth.gov).

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Freeport Elementary School Garden, 2013-2014 School Year