

School-grown food a hit with kids



Students learn about the growth cycle of strawberries.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Lunches aren't ordinary at Sierra House Elementary School. Sometimes produce grown in the domes is on the plates.

That's third-grader Breck Nealis' favorite part about the two growing domes – being able to eat some of the food at lunch. She was part of the group that planted the peppers.

Before the school year ends the plan is to have pizza for the students made with spices like basil and oregano that are growing in the domes.



Kale is thriving in the dome.

For those who don't attend the school, samples of the produce were available last week. There was sprouted baby broccoli with garlic goat cheese on a cucumber disc, kale with artichoke and Parmesan on a cracker, and olive tapenade wrapped in dome grown green leaf lettuce.

The greens are thriving. The freshness of the produce is nothing like the kids are used to having from the grocery store.



Much of the produce starts as seeds.

Last week Breck and her big sister, MacKenzie, were giving their mom a tour of the domes that sit adjacent to the South Lake Tahoe school. The public had a chance to meander through the domes that were the brainchild of parents.

Strawberries and tomatoes are growing in hanging planters. A kumquat tree has fruit ready to harvest. Lettuce, kale, Swiss chard, bell peppers, Anaheim peppers, sweet peas, carrots, radishes, beans and herbs are just some of the items being grown.

Everything was planted by students.



Sun filters in to the dome to help tomatoes grow.

A reflective paneling has been attached to part of the ceiling to attract the sun. Below it is a large almost hot- tub like basin of water. This is the natural heating mechanism so the dome won't freeze.

The domes have been a bigger success than most people anticipated. And it's not stopping at the domes. South Tahoe High School students in woodshop are making garden beds. They will be the dividers between the domes and playground.

Principal Ryan Galles told *Lake Tahoe News* this whole side of the school is likely to have some sort of contraption dealing

with growing food. (This area used to be where snow was pushed.)



Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe and community funds paid for the domes.

“The kids are so proud and excited,” he said.

First-grade teacher Kristi Wilson is the dome manager. She is spearheading the curriculum for each grade level. In the lobby there are student projects about the life cycle of a plant and how dirt made their lunch.