

Horticulture sells to local restaurant

by Andrew Koczian

On the outskirts of Clackamas Community College is the Clairmont building, home to the Horticulture department. Earlier this summer, CCC horticulture instructor Chris Konieczka began to form a relationship with a local Bugatti's restaurant, just minutes away from campus.

The focus of the relationship was to "give students the opportunity to grow organic produce while somewhat mimicking a real buyer/seller market for their crop," said Konieczka. He worked with the managers of the restaurant to price their produce, matching the weekly prices of competing vendors like Sysco.

"Although ideally when you're selling organic produce, you mark the prices up because the quality is better, but I was more concerned about getting our foot in the door and starting this relationship for the students," said Konieczka.

For Bugatti's the agreement is just as exciting. "We've posted a few things on Facebook about our involvement for our guests. We hope the program continues to blossom as we further our involvement," said Trudy Hoekzma, a manager at the restaurant. In the future, Bugatti's will send the head chef or manager down the street every week to buy fresh produce during the harvesting season. The restaurant prides itself on having fresh locally grown produce for its customers.

The farm is located on campus directly behind the Clairmont building, making it easy for students in the program to work on their crops. "I'm really excited for this program to be in full swing," Konieczka said. "Before this relationship with Bugatti's, the produce we grew was sold at the CCC Farmers Market, but other than that, all the extras went to students and staff. With this added incentive, we have the opportunity to grow more types of produce in higher volume."

Because this relationship was such a recent agreement, the classes were only able to sell to Bugatti's twice this sea-

son, providing them with storage onions (a cured, long storing yellow onion,) potatoes and parsley. That being said, Konieczka expects Bugatti's to be able to pick up fresh organic produce weekly in the future. "In the height of the season (May-Oct.) students harvest every class period," he said. With those expectations students are gearing up for a big harvest.

With the season gone, students work on repairing their equipment from normal wear and tear after a harvest, as well as take time to reflect on what changes need to be made in order to create a more successful harvest. The profit from the sales of produce goes directly to buying more seeds and repairing equipment. In late January, classes will begin to plant seedlings to transplant, in preparation for spring. They expect a big harvest, adding lettuce, carrots, and bok choy to the list of fresh organic produce for sale.



Chris Konieczka helps the Food Harvest class get ready for the CCC farmers' market on Oct. 1. Produce from CCC gardens was also sold to Bugatti's this fall.

Photo by Liz Gomes