

# Family Time

## Growing up organic at Centerland Farms

*St. Paul JCC offered organic gardening for preschoolers this summer at Camp Centerland*

Through a donation from the Stan Rubin Endowment Fund for Children and Youth of the St. Paul JCC Endowment Funds, and a partnership with local company A Backyard Farm, three raised-bed gardens using organic square-foot farming methods produced everything from salad greens, beets, fennel, turnips and cabbage, to nasturtium, an edible flower.

Capitalizing on the growing trend of backyard farming, Centerland Farms is an innovative addition to the JCC's Camp Centerland curriculum.

Attendees at this year's Camp Centerland, a summer day camp for children 3 to 5 years old, established Centerland Farms, located at the St. Paul JCC. The garden was placed outside a glass-walled main hallway, allowing children and parents to watch the plants grow and produce. Centerland Farms was a visual reminder of lessons on planting, earthworms, seeds, and insects versus spiders. In the Jewish spirit of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), hands-on activities allowed kids at Camp Centerland

get their hands dirty and cultivate an appreciation of the earth and what it means to care for it.

"The goal of this project is for our campers to taste a variety of new vegetables and herbs, bring home recipes for families to make together, understand the basics of backyard farming, and learn about sustainability and reducing our carbon footprint," said Tracey Agranoff, Camp Centerland director. "This project not only beautifies our outdoor space, but the gardens use it to make a difference and an impact on the children's learning."

Centerland Farms grew through the fall and JCC preschool children picked up the project where the Camp Centerland campers left off. To extend the growing season in Minnesota, the farm was planted in succession, meaning that once early crops were finished, cool-weather crops

were planted.

In late September, gourds from Centerland Farms decorated the sukka.

— St. Paul JCC



Courtesy of the St. Paul JCC

**Preschoolers at the St. Paul JCC's Camp Centerland established an organic garden this summer, which continues to produce a fall harvest.**