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**Chartwells K12 and National Gardening Association Announce Exclusive Partnership Pairing  
Culinary and Gardening Expertise**

*One-of-a-kind strategic partnership to engage students in planting and harvesting foods to  
promote health, wellness and sustainability for generations to come*

**CHICAGO, IL- February 3, 2015** – Chartwells K12 today kicked-off a new partnership with the National Gardening Association/KidsGardening.org (NGA) to build gardens at schools nationwide in an effort to engage students in planting, harvesting and enjoying healthier foods. Chartwells, which provides school lunches to public and private schools across the country, will team up with NGA to help create living laboratories within schools, bringing gardening expertise to the culinary and nutrition foundation in Chartwells’ schools. Within the next several months, Chartwells will initially work with eight schools with the goal of increasing efforts by the end of 2015.

“Research and our own experience shows that kids who grow their own fruits and vegetables are more likely to eat them,” said Rhonna Cass, President of Chartwells K12. “Our partnership with the National Gardening Association will help Chartwells extend our promise to nourish the minds and bodies of our students by literally bringing to life the process of growing their own food.”

Highlights of the Chartwells school gardening pilot program with NGA include:

- Designing school-specific garden spaces, whether it’s indoors or outdoors
- Working with students to plant, nurture and harvest fruits and vegetables
- Incorporating the harvest into school lunch programs
- Creating vibrant education hubs to rally students, food service employees, parents, teachers and community members around the benefits of gardening and its impact on overall health

- Developing nutrition and sustainability education curriculum custom to school district classrooms to highlight positive community outcomes from building a school garden and the foods student will grow

“Our mission mirrors that of Chartwells, which is to empower the next generation to lead healthier lives,” said Jennifer Tedeschi, Chief Operating Officer of National Gardening Association. “Our integration with Chartwells will enable us to engage hundreds more students in the dynamic educational environment of gardening and for them to be active participants in growing and serving healthy and delicious food to their classmates.”

Chartwells and the National Gardening Association will work with eight school districts to develop and implement gardens tailored for each school’s climate, available space and educational opportunity. Together the eight school districts represent a variety of scenarios that will guide custom school garden implementation across the country. The initial pilot locations include:

- Florida: Duval County Public Schools
- Indiana: Metropolitan School District of Warren Township
- Michigan: Reed City Schools
- Missouri: Pattonville School Districts
- New Jersey: School District of the Chathams
- South Carolina: Spartanburg School District 3

This partnership creates a new way of engaging students in education through nutrition and sustainability awareness, hands-on knowledge of where food comes from and the opportunity to enjoy fresh, healthy produce that kids grow themselves.

For more information visit: [www.ChartwellsK12.com](http://www.ChartwellsK12.com).

### **About Chartwells K12**

Chartwells provides meals to dining services for more than 575 school districts, ranging from large public institutions to small charter and private schools, and prides itself on creating customized programs to match the requests of the students, parents and faculty. Chartwells is a culinary-focused organization with a mission to extend its passion, dedication, knowledge and enthusiasm into serving each student delicious and nutritious meals. The company is built on decades of food and education experience and driven by top culinary, nutrition, wellness and sustainability talent. For more information, visit <http://www.ChartwellsK12.com/>.

### **About KidsGardening.org**

KidsGardening.org is a resource of the National Gardening Association, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in Williston, VT. Their mission is to empower every generation to lead healthier lives, build stronger communities, and encourage environmental stewardship through educational gardening programs. Beginning with 50 youth garden grants in 1982, KidsGardening.org has delivered over 10,000 grants and awards, benefiting an estimated 2 million youth gardeners. To learn more and support their efforts visit [KidsGardening.org](http://KidsGardening.org)

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