



# Green St. Louis Machine GAZETTE

April/May  
2026  
Edition



Sustainability theme:

**SOCIAL JUSTICE**



For April and May, our sustainability theme is Social Justice (with a special focus on food

justice). As we bask in the glow of another incredible Green Gala, we are reminded that while there is so much progress to celebrate, there is still important work ahead. Across the St. Louis region, rising food insecurity continues to impact families and communities every day.

**Food insecurity** continues to plague our city. At Green St. Louis Machine, we believe social justice includes access to fresh, healthy food, nutrition education, and the tools needed to build community resilience. Through hands-on learning, students are gaining the skills to grow, cook, and share healthy foods right here in the city. Together, we are turning classrooms into spaces of empowerment, leadership, and lasting change.

We invite you to celebrate the fruits of this work with us.

**Reflecting on the Green**

**Gala**

Feedback from our April 9th Green Gala highlights a deeply positive and inspiring experience for our community. Attendees consistently praised the student involvement, especially in preparing and serving the food, which was described as both delicious and a powerful showcase of the nutritious impact of Tower Gardens.

Many guests appreciated the thoughtful touches that reflect our mission, such as the herb giveaways in biodegradable and reusable packaging. The event also stood out as a meaningful opportunity to recognize students, teachers, and supporters, reinforcing the strong sense of community behind Green St. Louis Machine.

The Gala itself was celebrated as a fun, uplifting way to promote agriculture and sustainability, with several attendees already looking forward to returning next year.

Overall, attendees described the evening as “simply amazing,” expressing gratitude for the dedication behind the event and excitement for its future growth.

This Year's Green Gala was a huge success. It was happy, vibrant and deliciouys. Click on the link for some experiential pictures.

**[View Photos from the event Here!](#)**

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## **Sustaniability Spotlight** ***St. Louis AgriBusiness Club***

In this April/May issue of the Green Gazette, we shine a light on a powerful and growing partnership that sits at the intersection of sustainability and social justice—the St. Louis AgriBusiness Club.

At our April 9th Green Gala, students, families, educators, and community members gathered in a joyful celebration of conviviality, culture, and community. The evening was filled with vibrant and delicious dishes that were not only budget-friendly but nutritious, crafted by Chef Rona Leah and her team, featuring fresh greens and herbs grown by Green St. Louis Machine students across our partner schools and at our

Tower Farm. Each recipe told a story—of learning, of nourishment, and of pride—and every participating school was recognized for their contributions. But beyond the celebration, the evening also pointed toward the future. We were honored to welcome Dean Dittmar, Executive Director of the St. Louis AgriBusiness Club, as our keynote speaker. His message underscored something deeply aligned with this issue’s theme of Social Justice: access to opportunity matters. The agribusiness sector represents a wide network of meaningful, sustainable careers—right here in St. Louis. From urban agriculture and food production to logistics, technology, and environmental stewardship, these pathways offer our students the chance to build stable, dignified livelihoods, support their families, and invest back into their communities. Creating awareness and access to these opportunities is not just workforce development—it is social justice in action. Through our growing partnership with the St. Louis AgriBusiness Club, and new collaborations like Missouri University Extension 4-H, Green St. Louis Machine is helping bridge the gap between education and real-world opportunity. We are not only teaching students how to grow food—we are helping them grow futures.

The Green Gala reflected the strength of this vision. With families showing up in force—including one student who proudly brought 11 family members—we were reminded that this work extends far beyond the classroom. It is rooted in community, powered by connections, and sustained by a shared purpose of cultivating sustainable food systems in an urban environment.

As you explore the photos from this unforgettable evening, we invite you to see more than a celebration. See a movement—one where sustainability, education, and social justice come together to cultivate healthier communities and brighter futures for the St. Louis community.

## **SPOTLIGHT Green Students and Teacher of the Month**



Above: Kairos Academy High School students served before the gala assisting the team of chefs with food preparation. During the Gala they served the guests. Afterwards, they stayed to clean up.

These students volunteered themselves to serve under the auspices of their teacher Ms. Emi Belciak. These students earned skills and service hours and some delicious leftovers to take home! This collaboration is very important for our students who most of the time are at a loss of a safe place to earn their community service hours in the city and for GSM needing volunteers! Kudos to Ma Belciak for making it work! Kairos has a Green in St. Louis Machine club that meets weekly to harvest from their Tower Garden and make inventive and creative dishes that include what they're growing! grown in their class!



Also, we must mention appreciation to students from Marian Middle School's Green St. Louis Machine team and their teacher Nicolle von der Heyde, who were enlisted, last minute, to help serve! They could have been really anxious about it in the moment, but they rose to the occasion as a team!!



Marian Middle School's Green St. Louis Machine team and their Teacher Nicolle von der Heyde



Students from Kairos Academy and Marian Middle School serving at the Green Gala



Elementary student displays her 4-H. ribbon. (Note: ages five through eight receive green ribbons for their participation.)



Elementary student enjoying sauteed carrots and thyme.



First graders excited and proud to show off their healthy plate to Mrs. Erundu.

## Community Partners of the Month: Boys and Girls Clubs

A mainstay community partner of Green St. Louis Machine has been Mathews-Dickey Boys And Girls

Club for over 10 years! Year over year for the Green Gala, they host the community at the club! MD has a Green St Louis Machine garden club and a team of junior chefs!

Another boys and girls club that has a thriving Green St Louis Machine team is Gene Slay's Girls & Boys Club. At this year's Green Gala one of their students won a special award for having the most guests and attendance! Rayden Anderson had 11 guests!

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Matthews-Dickey Club Director Ptah Walls is introduced to the gala guests by Sherry and Stella.



Rayden Anderson of GeneSlay's girls and boys club receiving an award for having the most people (11) at the gala!



Mathews-Dickey Junior Chef club preparing omelettes topped with fresh sorrel salad using sorrel growing in their Tower Gardens. (creating the recipe alongside leadership by Chef Rona Leah)





Gene Slay's Green St Louis Machine team displays the bath bombs they made for a 4-H project that was judged, and which resulted in them receiving a blue ribbon!

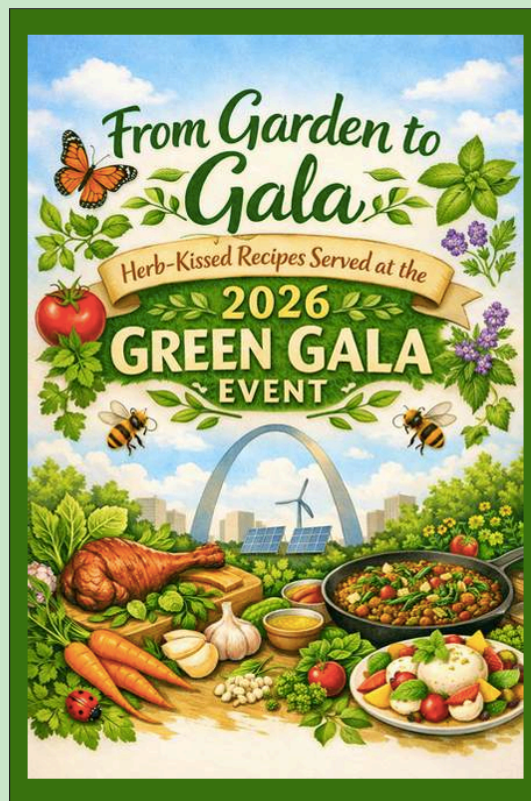
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## **Recipe of the Month:**

There was quite a demand for recipes from the delicious dishes (200 servings of each dish!) featured at the Green gala! One of the interesting dishes served was called Marry Me, Lentils! Guess what? Many people don't cook with lentils, although they are high in protein and very reasonable to purchase. Our lead Chef, Chef Rona Leah wanted to demonstrate how delicious lentils are and tempted Green gala attendees with her recipes for Marry Me Lentils and Tuscan Lentils, using all the herbs and greens grown by students!

Want to learn more about how to cook delicious dishes with lentils? Stay tuned for next school year where Chef will be visiting classrooms leading cooking workshops featuring lentils and using herbs and greens grown at each partner, organization!

See quite a few of the recipes below. These are student-created recipes, professionally prepared by Chef Rona Leah and her team.



[CLICK TO DOWNLOAD](#)

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## President's Corner:



**Governor Mike Kehoe with Stella Erundu of GSM  
at St. Louis AgriBusiness Club Meeting at Bayer Crop Science**

Dear friends of Green St Louis Machine,

This issue of the Green Gazette's Sustainability theme is **Social Justice**. **Food justice is social justice. GSM is working to encourage our students to sustain themselves especially when it comes to food and healthy habits. To this effect the this years Gala featured Social Food Justice celebration with our students, families and friends! Please read and enjoy the debriefing responses form our North Side Community School (Pre-K–5th Grade) students regarding this year's Green Gala: 2026 GSM Green Gala Student Debrief Highlight:**

Following the 2026 Green Gala, debrief sessions were conducted with Pre-K through 5th grade students from North Side Community School to capture student reflections, experiences, and key takeaways from the event.

### **Student Responses and Reflections**

- Students expressed feelings of excitement, happiness, and pride about attending the Green Gala.
- Many students described the event as “special,” “beautiful,” and “fun.”
- The decorations, formal atmosphere, and “bling” made students feel important and celebrated.
- Some younger students shared that they initially felt nervous or scared in the large social setting, but later became comfortable and enjoyed the experience.
- Students stated that the food was delicious and meaningful because it was connected to produce they had helped grow.
- Many students demonstrated pride in participating in the farm-to-table experience.
- Students observed strong family engagement throughout the event.
- Several students noted that parents and guests wanted recipes from the dishes served at the Gala.
- Students enjoyed meeting and interacting with students and families from other schools and organizations.
- Students shared that the guest speaker helped them learn about future careers connected to:
  - Agriculture
  - Health and wellness (“Food is Medicine”)
  - Bioscience
  - Logistics
  - Imports and exports
  - Community leadership
- Students reflected positively on their behavior and participation during the event.
- Students stated that they:
  - Listened attentively
  - Followed directions carefully
  - Participated respectfully
  - Demonstrated appropriate behavior in a formal public setting
- Students showed increased awareness of healthy eating and the connection between nutritious food and good health.
- Students demonstrated growing confidence, social awareness, and pride in representing their school and community.

### **Overall Impact of the Green Gala**

Student reflections indicate that the 2026 Green Gala successfully promoted:

- Pride and self-confidence
- Healthy eating awareness
- Community and family engagement
- Exposure to future careers and opportunities
- Positive social-emotional growth

- Respectful public behavior
- Appreciation for urban agriculture and sustainability

The debrief responses confirm that the Green Gala continues to be a meaningful educational and community-building experience that connects agriculture, culture, health, and student leadership in joyful and memorable ways.

As highlighted in last month's sustainability theme, "Respect for Limits," GSM continues to teach students that healthy communities are built through responsible choices, environmental stewardship, and equitable food systems. Through tower garden classrooms and farm-to-table education, students are learning lifelong habits that support healthier individuals, stronger communities, and a more sustainable future.

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## Upcoming May Events

### **Wednesday, May 13, 2026 | 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

will showcase student projects during the St. Louis County 4-H Night, featuring displays and ribbons earned by participating students. The event will take place at Brittany Woods Middle School.

Guests will enjoy a light supper, snacks, games, and self-paced activities while exploring exciting student-led 4-H projects. Come support our students and celebrate their accomplishments in STEM, sustainability, and urban agriculture!

### **Friday, May 15, 2026 | 5:00 PM**

The Green St. Louis Machine Club will host its annual Kraken Cook-Off, a student-driven farm-to-table celebration inspired by the Green Gala.

Students will showcase their creativity by preparing dishes made with fresh, student-grown ingredients—bringing the garden directly to the plate. Guests are invited to taste student-created recipes and celebrate youth leadership in healthy food innovation.

Event Location: Kairos Academies

### **Saturday, May 16, 2026 | 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM**

Biome STEAM School's 2nd Grade class will participate in a special entrepreneurial showcase at Soulard Farmers Market.

Students will proudly sell their capstone project—a custom seasoning blend created from herbs they grew and dried in their classroom. This hands-on farm-to-table project was guided by , owner of , providing students with real-world experience in agriculture, entrepreneurship, and marketing.

Come support these young growers and entrepreneurs at Soulard Market!

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# GIVE TODAY BECAUSE IT'S GIVE STL DAY!

Every donation helps us continue planting seeds of change in our community.

With your support, we are able to educate, inspire, and empower the next generation of sustainable leaders



SCAN QR CODE TO DONATE!  
THANK YOU!

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📱 **The GSM Podcast** 📱

**Episode 2- If you missed it, you can find it on YouTube  
@GreenSTLTV**

*....or click below!*

## Green STL Machine presents a podcast about its Annual Green Gala

Learn all about GSM's exciting annual event!

**GSM Podcast**  
March 29th @ 8 PM CST

**Featuring:**  
Sherry Amen  
Stella Erondu  
Ciara Fisher  
Emilia Belciak



Our Partners:



## Why do we do The Green St. Louis Machine?



**Bill to create agriculture education program gets unanimous support from Missouri House**

[ksdk.com](http://ksdk.com)

Food insecurity in St. Louis contributes to high rates of food insecurity, childhood obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Thousands of children live in areas with little to no access to quality grocery stores, leaving families with limited options for fresh, nutritious food. As a result, processed and unhealthy foods have become a regular part of their lifestyle.



Many of these children have never tasted or even learned the names of common fruits and vegetables. This lack of exposure to fresh, nutritious food affects their school performance, mental outlook, and overall well-being. Over time, poor nutrition increases their risk of developing diabetes, heart disease, and other serious health issues later in life.



YOU have the power to make a difference in their lives today — paving the way for healthier futures! Through our program, students grow, harvest, prepare, and enjoy fresh, nutritious foods, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment over their own food choices. Together, we can transform communities and break the cycle of poor nutrition. Join us in our mission! Donate or volunteer today to help us create a healthier, brighter future for our children.

## GSM PARTNERS & DONORS



GSM IS INVITING ALL OUR FRIENDS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO GET INVOLVED!

The Green St. Louis Machine relies heavily on donations and support from volunteers and community partners.

VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT GSM!

[www.GreenSTLMachine.org](http://www.GreenSTLMachine.org)



**We LOVE our volunteers  
at Green St. Louis Machine (GSM)**

Come volunteer with us!



## Video Clip!

You can learn more about our mission by clicking here to watch our video: [Green St. Louis Machine Promo Video](#) and feel free to pass this video on to your friends and family. Thank you for your support!



## Download our Mission Statement Flyer!

[Click here to download](#)



*Thank YOU for  
partnering with us!*

Wish to donate? Click here:

## Donate to The Green St. Louis Machine!



Here's what your donation can do if you click on **DONATE ANY AMOUNT ABOVE:**

**\$200 or more per month: Pledge towards seeds and supplies purchases!!**

**\$1,500 will buy a Tower Garden for a school desperate for the opportunity to grow food in a classroom!**

**Donate T-SHIRTS for 500 GSM students \$5,000 (Can have your company logo too!)**

**Donate 500 APRONS for Green St Louis Machine students – \$6,500 (Can have your company logo too!)**

**Support the GSM portion of salary for a GSM AmeriCorps Vista (Like the Peace Corps only working on American soil) for a year \$5,000**

**Support GSM Summer Camp, In-School or After-School Farm-to-Table Project-Based Learning for your favorite school or organization: from \$3,500**



Have questions?

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