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Farm Brings Hydroponics To Kansas Schools

Brad Fourby, a farmer in Pittsburg, Kan., grows hundreds of heads of lettuce in converted shipping containers for Leafy Green Farms.

“I moved from California to Kansas during the pandemic to start Leafy Green Farms,” he says. “I saw a need for more fresh vegetables to be grown and consumed locally.”

Fourby’s chosen method is hydroponics, the process of growing crops in water-based nutrient solutions rather than in soil. His system uses a controlled indoor environment in converted shipping containers to optimize variables such as temperature, humidity and lighting, with plenty of vertical space to grow greens from floor to ceiling in upright racks and towers.

The greens grow for six weeks in their vertical towers in preparation for two harvests per week. Approximately 200 heads are harvested at a time, most of which are donated to food pantries in Joplin.

The farm specializes in lettuce and other leafy crops that thrive vertically, such as Swiss chard and basil. Seeds are planted in pods, with about 10 pods per tower. Each tower is roughly 6 in. wide and includes a wick running down the center to help the plants retain moisture. Water and liquid nutrients are dispensed at the top of the tower. As the water flows down, the plants take what they need, and the excess is recycled back into the tank.

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The indoor nature of hydroponic farms also leads to minimal pest problems and almost no need for pesticides. If insects become an issue, Fourby can drop the container’s internal temperature to freeze them out. He works independently of

weather conditions and can grow his greens year-round.

The farm began as a business venture to produce local, affordable greens for sale. It has since evolved into a community outreach program that provides schools with agricultural learning opportunities. A grant has expanded the mission by delivering shipping-container farms to local schools in Southeast Kansas through the Farm Classroom program.

The shipping containers are delivered, hooked up, and put in working order, then left for the teachers to use in lesson plans. Then Leafy Green Farms acts like a pool service, coming in at night or on weekends for general maintenance.

“Students and teachers work together inside the vertical farms and produce food year-round,” says Fourby. “There’s a real philosophy of a place for everything and everything in its place. Students start with seeds, grow them to a seedling stage, and then transfer them to a vertical tower. From that point on, they monitor and eventually harvest and repeat the process.”

Leafy Green Farms currently supports 10 school farms, offering an experience that is satisfying for all.

“The students can see how their efforts have grown and paid off, especially when they recognize their grown lettuce in the cafeteria,” says Fourby.

He advises potential hydroponic farmers to adopt the curiosity of these high school students and to increase their exposure to hydroponic systems.

“Visit one of the many vertical container farms that are now being operated in Southeast Kansas High Schools, or visit our website.”

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Handcrafted Spoons Gaining Popularity

Galena Spoon Co., located in Galena, Ill., offers handcrafted wooden kitchenware made by artisans from both local and nationwide sources. The company was founded in 2014 in Dundee, Ill., originally known as Fox River Spoon Co.

“I can’t say there was a clear goal from the start,” says owner Paul Pendola. “I had a strong desire to simplify my life through making functional art.”

But as Pendola quickly learned, spoon carvers are made, not born.

“Simple as it is in form and function, the wooden spoon itself is an incredibly complex tool by design,” he says. “Capturing balance and symmetry, the desired length, width and depth, and a pleasing overall look and feel that’s both delicate in the hand and durable in the kitchen requires me, as an artist, to create with my hand, my head and my heart.”

Pendola refers to his spoon carving process as the “One, Two, Three Method.”

“I’m using one solid piece of locally and sustainably sourced fresh-felled greenwood, my own two hands, and three carving tools, including an axe, straight knife and hook knife.”

It took several years of practice for Pendola to gain the confidence to sell his wares at a small farmers market. This eventually led to multi-day shows and the possibility of turning it into a full-time business. Pendola moved to Galena, kept his full-time corporate job, and continued building his spoon business on the side.

“I eventually felt confident enough in the product that I left my full-time job to open a brick-and-mortar location. This led to teaching classes, a bit of wholesale work, some commercial jobs, and more recently, partnerships with businesses here in Galena and around the country.”

Today, the Galena Spoon Co. includes a retail shop in historic downtown Galena, a studio and gallery just a few steps away, and a woodworking shop in a rented warehouse space a few miles outside the town. The studio hosts intimate artist events and provides space for spoon-carving workshops.

“I love the process of demonstrating the craft, engaging with customers about the design and production process, sharing kitchen stories, working with other like-minded makers and suppliers,” says Pendola. “We’re offering something unique and unexpected.”

Beyond spoons, the company offers a wide variety of handcrafted woodenware, including spatulas, boards and serving utensils.

“Each item is made using locally sourced wood and all-natural, food-safe, and shelf-stable drying oils,” says Pendola. “Our spoons are made entirely by hand using only an axe, straight knife and hook knife. No tem-



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plates, no power tools, and no computer-guided routers or lasers.”

Since the merchandise is handcrafted, managing lead times and inventory are top priorities.

“Our cost of goods tends to be higher as compared to traditional retail, as we purchase items at a price point that is fair and sustainable.”

While spoons are the bestselling item, the store features products in three main categories: woodenware, kitchenware and gourmet fare. Other handcraft stores are also represented, including The Holland Bowl Mill (Holland, Mich.); rolling pins, spoons and boards from Whetstone Wood- enware (Silverlake, Ind.); and handcrafted boards from Edward Wohl Studio (Spring Green, Wis.).

“The recent move into our forever home at 305 S. Main St. in the heart of historic downtown Galena marks a new beginning for the business,” says Pendola. “Since opening in our new space on February 14th, 2026, we’ve expanded our hours of operation and hired additional staff.”

Plans for the coming years include expanding product offerings, rebuilding the website, and boosting promotion of the online store.

“We’ll continue to offer spoon carving workshops and expand the Maker’s Table opportunities for visiting artists, while also making the retail space available for private receptions and other events, such as honey tastings, cooking classes and more.”

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Restored Chevy Promotes Hardware Store

In 1956, when Paul Dauwalder purchased a hardware store in Scottsdale, Ariz., delivering goods to the town’s 2,761 residents was an everyday occurrence. His delivery vehicle was a 1953 Chevrolet C3800 flatbed stake truck. In 2026, Paul’s Hardware celebrates 70 years in business. A lot has changed, but one thing remains the same: a Chevy flatbed truck.

The current showpiece, restored and painted shiny red with white wheels, remains a 1953 Chevy C3800 flatbed. Although it’s neither fast nor large enough

to deliver the prompt, speedy service that Paul’s customers have come to expect, it still represents continuity and a commitment to customer service.

Julie Buchkowsky, Paul Dauwalder’s granddaughter, is now president of Paul’s Ace Hardware Stores, which has eight locations.

In 1956, Scottsdale was a small town east of Phoenix. Today, it has more than 250,000 residents, and Paul’s serves them from three stores. Five other stores serve the sprawling Phoenix metro area, including one with a full-service lumber yard.

The iconic C3800 flatbed restoration was completed in 2006. The vehicle has its original 235 cu. in. 105-hp inline-6 engine, but it’s definitely not fast enough to speed along Phoenix freeways. Still, the truck garners plenty of store publicity by leisurely rolling through local parades and posing for customer photos at all of Paul’s locations.

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Dauwalder purchased a hardware store in Scottsdale, Ariz., in 1956 and delivered goods in a 1953 Chevy flatbed stake truck. Paul’s Hardware has restored a ‘53 Chevy just like his original truck.