We Need More Dirt In Our Diet
Many people in well developed countries, including America, are suffering from a diet deficient in dirt.

Antibacterial soaps, sprays, cleaning wipes, and other disinfectants have helped us defeat and defend ourselves against many diseases and health issues. However, too much of a good thing can be bad. Researchers have found that there is a strong connection between the sterile environment kids are growing up in and a recent rise in allergies, autoimmune problems, and gut related disorders. In removing all bacteria and protecting kids from getting dirty, we are preventing the formation of our natural and beneficial gut bacteria. This could be the key to boosting immune function, reducing digestive problems, and reducing allergies. In addition, scientists have found a connection between our digestive health, our mood, and mental health. When our gut is happy, our whole body is happy.

But, where do these healthy gut bacteria come from? Consuming some probiotic-rich foods, such as yogurt, sauerkraut, and other fermented foods like pickles are a great start. However, these probiotic-rich foods are missing an important ingredient, soil-based organisms (SBOs). SBOs are microorganisms that are, as their name suggests, found in soil. But, why are SBOs so important? Unlike probiotic-rich foods and supplements, which contain bacteria strains that may not survive the digestive system, SBOs contain stronger strains of beneficial bacteria that are better able to survive the digestive system.

Getting more SBOs in your life actually does not take much effort. Here are some suggestions to help you get started:

1) **Have your own garden, or shop at your local farmer’s market:** Produce grown in a garden or bought at a farmer’s market is in its most natural state and contains billions of health-boosting SBO’s that are still attached to the roots, stems, and skins of the produce. Avoid cleaning your produce with a fruit and veggie wash when plucked from your garden or purchased at a farmer’s market. Instead, just give it a quick rinse and enjoy.

2) **Sweeten with locally grown honey:** Regular sugar is just sucrose with no other components. While still important to use in moderation, local honey is more than just sugar. It contains antioxidants, amino acids, electrolytes and antimicrobial compounds that are extremely beneficial for your health.

3) **Get a dog:** When you pet your dog, all of the SBO’s they picked up from being outside get passed on to you through your skin. Your skin is the largest organ and incredibly porous, so those bacteria that get on your skin from your dog can eventually end up in your bloodstream.

4) **Go ‘Earthing’**; Walking barefoot on grass, dirt paths, and/or shorelines can help you absorb billions of beneficial bacteria and microbes through your skin. In addition, it’s been discovered that walking barefoot outside can help stabilize your internal, bioelectrical environment, which results in normalizing much of your body’s natural functions.

This summer, take your shoes off, walk outside, make some mud pies, start a garden, and love on your dog to start getting those SBO’s your body needs to be happy and healthy!
TAFT MEMORIES
As the year comes to an end we asked our educators to look back and tell us about some of their favorite memories from being at Taft.

Will:
My highlight from this past year has been all the small things that we have done as a team together. All the laughs and smiles, the classes taught, and the good times had just sitting around the dining table or the campfire. For me the memorable moments are rarely the big things that happen but the small things in between.

Anne:
One of the things that I have always loved here at Taft is going out on night hikes to look at the stars and hopefully hear some owls. It is always such a pleasure telling students stories about the constellations and seeing the Milky Way for the first time. I will especially remember a night hike I lead when my group had to go meet up with their teachers in North Field and we were rewarded by seeing some shooting stars and an amazing night sky after our journey.

Bethany:
One of the things I really enjoy about working at Lorado Taft is that we are able to carry on the mission of the original Eagle’s Nest Art Colony, which is to inspire. I love being a part of inspiring students (and even some teachers and parents) to create, to think outside the box, to investigate, to become their own teacher, to explore, to step out of their comfort zone, and to become passionate about and care about nature. Another highlight is taking the students out to look at the stars and hearing them gasp and marvel at the vast amount of stars in the sky. It’s also exciting and fun to be able to be there for a lot of the students “firsts”: whether it be their first time away from home, their first time in the woods, or even their first s’more. Overall, it has been a great year full of many treasured memories!

Alex:
Inspiration from the past year has come in a variety of ways. What motivates me the most are the students that visit the Lorado Taft. It has been so fun teaching night hikes because all of the students and teachers are engaged in the activities. One memory that I have is of teaching the game called ‘Bat and Moth.’ The students were laughing so much while they were also learning about how echolocation works for bats. Echolocation is a process in which mammals, as well as some birds, emit calls out to the environment and listen to the echoes of those call that return from various objects near them. Bats use these echoes to locate the moths near them for food and to navigate their way through the night.

Katie:
My favorite thing about working at Taft is seeing the kids enjoy nature, when they’re rubbing mud or moss on their face during forest ecology or running through the bushes in orienteering. I like when we’re walking through the forest and the students get really excited about fungus and have to go run and check it out.
Ashley:
One thing I have really enjoyed about working at Taft is being able to build relationships with the kids while also helping them develop into passionate lifelong learners. In my teambuilding class, I always start by asking the kids what they are confident in doing and why they feel confident in what they do. It is always amazing to be able to hear about what their passions are and how I can relate to them as their teacher. My goal is to be able to have students apply the knowledge they are learning to their passions so they can become the best versions of themselves in what THEY want to become. In my classes, it is awesome to see how much the students have developed in their skills from the time they arrive at Taft to the time they leave. I have seen some students completely transform themselves in such a short amount of time and I feel so honored to be a part of their development into the informed and engaged citizens I know they will become in the future.

Teairra:
Over the months, I’ve grown rather close these people called my “co-workers,” but honestly, I don’t consider them co-workers. I consider them family. Each plays an important role. You can go to them when you’re struggling. It doesn’t matter with what; it can be related to work or personal. It doesn’t matter, because they’re there for you, regardless. Their entire face lights up when you talk with them about their passions. They’re always so eager to share their knowledge with you and others. They’re constantly down to go for a stroll in the woods or just relax in a hammock or go to the pet or plant store. I’ve never really worked at a place where you get these kinds of connections, and it’s the best. I can keep going on forever, but I won’t. I just know, that when I leave Lorado Taft, I’ve made some friendships and memories that will last forever.
Congratulations to all of our schools who got zero ort for at least one meal while at Lorado Taft! Many schools were very close, and we know the students worked really hard to achieve their goals. We hope that the idea of zero ort is something that students take with them back to their schools and communities to share with their families and friends. Here are a few reminders to help continue your pursuit of zero ort in the future.

- **Try it first:** You can always go back for more so start with a little; if you like it, go back for more!
- **Watch your liquids:** Make sure to finish your drinks, soup, and sauces. Don’t forget that water is a precious resource; try not to just throw it away.
- **Don’t let your eyes be bigger than your stomach:** Our stomachs are only about the size of our fists, so make sure you are not over-eating or taking more than you can actually finish.
- **Save your leftovers:** If you don’t finish everything at a meal, save it for the next day. You will have a delicious lunch and save time, money, and energy.
- **Set a goal:** A great way to reduce our waste is to set a goal with family and friends. See if you can get zero ort for one meal and then increase your goal.

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Contributing Author: Bethany Kautz– *We Need More Dirt In Our Diet*

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