

Introducing gardening

Schools in DeSoto sow seeds for success

Special to My Life

Thursday, April 28, 2011

Global Youth Service Day (GYSD) was celebrated at seven elementary schools on April 14 during the Prime Time after school program. "Sowing Seeds of Success" is a school garden project of the DeSoto County Community Health Council, a component of the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi's Get A Life! initiative to fight childhood obesity.

The GYSD project was led by Master Gardener Pam Selby, a member of the Community Health Council. She was assisted at the sites by lots of volunteers, children and the after school program staff. Master Gardeners Lynda Austin, Ruffin Borden, Sharon Buske, Joyce Haslip, Jan Knight, Betty Lee, J.R. Owens, Bettie Pruitt, Norm Scott, Pam Selby, Anthie Sutterfield, Tom Walls, and Peggy Young volunteered to transport garden mix to the locations as well as provide assistance with the project at each site.

Jim Robinson, Executive Director of the Olive Branch Family YMCA, which manages the Prime Time after school program, and member of the Community Health Council, spent countless hours building raised beds and delivering garden mix. Raised vegetable and herb gardens were planted at each school and a potted herb garden was prepared for delivery to each of the First Regional Library branches in the county. As people visit the libraries, they will be able to read the posters and information prepared by the children on the benefits of growing herbs. This is the children's way of sharing lessons learned.

GYSD would not have been a success without the sponsors who gave of time, money and materials. They include members of Team Depot (Horn Lake Home Depot volunteers), Entergy, Nature's Earth of Southaven, Four Seasons Garden Center, Quality Landscape and Garden Center, City of Horn Lake, Lowe's of Southaven and Olive Branch, and the DeSoto County Community Health Council. National sponsors include Youth Service America, United Healthcare Heroes, and State Farm Foundation.

Not only did the volunteers from the Horn Lake Home Depot donate to and participate in GYSD on April 14, they also sent out a team on April 20 to four schools that had requested raised vegetable beds and built two beds at each school. The store provided the material, labor and seeds/plants. Team Depot members included Cindy Coffman,

Tracie Sassums, Charleen Milton and Jamie Reynolds. Kudos to their community involvement and support for our children.

Elected officials from throughout the county were invited to participate in GYSD. We saw Mayor Greg Davis at Hope Sullivan Elementary, Mayor Nat Baker at Shadow Oaks Elementary, Mayor Chip Johnson at Oak Grove Elementary, Mayor Gene Alday at Walls Elementary along with Walls Alderman Lynda Austin, and Olive Branch Alderman Pat Hamilton at Pleasant Hill Elementary. Stephanie Morrison, State Farm agent in Horn Lake, brought her gloves and helped the children plant herbs at Shadow Oaks Elementary. Shadow Oaks Elementary even had a special visit from Sheldon, Mississippi Riverkings' mascot and Derek Landmesser, team captain.

Schools which have raised gardens are Oak Grove Central, Center Hill Elementary, Lewisburg Elementary, Pleasant Hill, Shadow Oaks, Walls and Lake Cormorant Elementary, Southaven Intermediate, Horn Lake Elementary and Horn Lake Intermediate.

"This is a wonderful way to introduce our children to gardening and the responsibilities that go with it as well as teaching them to eat nutritional food," said Pam Selby.

Each school site will have at least one vegetable garden and one herb garden. Health Council members, Master Gardeners and other volunteers will be encouraged to work with the schools and site supervisors of the after school programs to see that the gardens are well maintained and reap a harvest.

"Connecting people who care with causes that matter is the mission of the Community Foundation, and working with GYSD and people who care like all of the volunteers, the schools and the after school program with a cause that matters, school gardens and our children's health, we (CFNM and the Community Health Council) are proud to sponsor this project," said Peggy Linton. For more information on the Community Foundation and Get A Life! go to cfnm.org or call (662)449-5002.



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