

Award #: 23 **Award Name:** Civic Concern

Award Submitted by: Arlington Heights Garden Club **Number of members:** 103

Date: 11/1/21

1. **New Project:** Yes No X **Beginning Date:** 6/11/20 **Ending Date:** ongoing

2. Brief summary and objectives of project:

The Arlington Heights Garden Club was asked in early 2020 by the community education staff of School District 214, to partner with them at Forest View Alternative High School to provide continuing education gardening classes to adults, to plant a demonstration community vegetable garden plot, and to provide gardening education and cooking demonstrations in the high school's kitchen with the harvested produce. Unfortunately, due to COVID 19 epidemic, the spring classes of 2020 had to be cancelled and the students were doing their work remotely and did not assist in the garden. Plans did proceed with the demonstration community vegetable garden which was planted, maintained and harvested by Garden Club members to provide fresh produce to community food pantries.

During the 2021 spring growing season, with COVID safety protocols in place, Club members were able to meet in person with students and teach the basics of seed starting, potato planting, and transplanting vegetable plants. As part of the indoor seed starting, one of our members modified some carts to make them effective lighted and temperature controlled seed starting platforms. This year a raised handicapped accessible vegetable garden was added to the in ground plots to expose students to another form of outdoor gardening. This allowed a number of the students to participate in this project who otherwise would have been unable to do regular outdoor gardening.

3. Involvement of club members, other organizations, etc:

When it came time to begin indoor seed planting for 2021, District 214 requested that we limit the number of club members that would interact with the student population. Classes were in person with masks and social distancing enforced. Jim Spannagel, Club President, with special education experience volunteered to teach the classes and was assisted by 6 teachers and teacher assistants from the school. The 22 students were scattered around the gymnasium at tables where they were able to learn about the principles of plant growth and seed starting. The project that generated the most excitement among the students was probably the potato planting class where students took their potatoes home to care for them over the summer.

When it came time to plant outdoors, members used garden tillers to prepare the soil and added amendments to the raised handicapped accessible beds to improve the soil. Another club member donated his garden tripod for the benefit of the "3 sisters", corn, squash and beans. Once school was out and students no longer on site, fifteen Garden Club members stepped in and cared for the garden throughout the summer. Members worked in pairs all summer caring for vegetables that

were harvested and donated to local food pantries with the hope that once students returned to school in August they might take over the weeding and harvesting tasks. Unfortunately, school schedules changed and it was not possible for students to do weeding and harvesting. Again, members of the club stepped in and completed the gardening year and cleanup of the garden. There were approximately 55 volunteer hours for all of these tasks in 2021.

4. Project expenses and means of funding:

Many of the seeds, seed potatoes and transplants were provided by garden club members. Many tools were also loaned by club members. The garden club retrofitted two mobile growing carts with updated LED growing lights the first year at a cost of approximately \$200 for plant propagation by the students.

During the 2021 growing season, the carts were again improved by adding temperature control, heat lamps, electric cords, and thermometers. These expenses along with potting soil, containers, seeds and potatoes totaled about \$160.

5. Continuing involvement, follow-up maintenance:

Garden Club members weeded, watered and harvested on a weekly rotating basis throughout the summer. Several hundred pounds of fresh produce were donated to the Wheeling Township Food Pantry and Catholic Charities. The gardens have been put to bed for the winter, but plans have already been made with District 214 school officials to continue the vegetable growing classes in the late winter of 2022. This program has been well received by the students and teachers have asked that we begin the vegetable growing sessions earlier to include more content for students.

6. Attach or insert photos.



Students working with Club President, Jim Spannagel to plant potatoes.



Students preparing the soil in handicapped accessible raised beds and student working with a teacher to decide planting plans.



Club member Mike Relaz helping to prepare the soil for the large garden, student planting and working with Jim Spannagel to cut potatoes that students grew from home over the summer.