Florida Master Gardener
Awards of Excellence Entry Form

ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY AUGUST 1, 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Bay County</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Margaret K. Lewis School Gardening Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Start Date</td>
<td>August 2013</td>
<td>Project End Date</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Master Gardener(s)</td>
<td>Judy Stevens, Janet Psikogios, Dee Jones, Vicki Wahl, Dena DiFilippo, Norm Shiver, Michele Rigdon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CATEGORY: Indicate only one category per entry form. You must assign your entry to a specific category to be considered for an award in that category. Entries are limited to the categories indicated below.

- Beautification
- Demonstration Garden
- Educational Materials Development
- County Displays/Exhibits
- Newsletter
- Outstanding Master Gardener**
- Personal Communications
- Service to 4-H and Other Youth
- Diversity
- Communications
- Outstanding Master Gardener Team

Review the applicable category entry form for exceptions to the general submittal rules above.

Below completed by the County Master Gardener

I approve the submittal of this project: Margaret K. Lewis School Gardening Program

Julie B. McConnell

Master Gardener Coordinator
Printed Name

Master Gardener Coordinator
Signature

Date

Please complete and return this entry form in PDF form by August 1, 2015 to Wendy Wilber.

Revised 6/2015
Margaret K. Lewis School Gardening Program

Program description: Margaret K. Lewis is a school for approximately 140 exceptional (special) needs youth (pre K-18 years old) located in Panama City, Florida. A gardening project was started in August 2013 to provide therapy and assist youth in developing life skills. Some have profound physical motor skills challenges, others are sensitive to soil and are afraid to touch it or become dirty, and others are challenged by the thought of trying new things or by being able to stay on task to complete a project. Seven Master Gardeners partnered with Bay County 4-H, Bay District Schools, Bay County Farm Bureau, Panama City Women’s Club, Let’s Talk Dirt, Springfield Nursery, Habit for Humanity, and Eastern Shipbuilding Group. Master Gardeners included: Judy Stevens, program leader responsible for planning, organizing, and implementation; Janet Psikogios, administrative and technical computer support and led activities; Dee Jones, Vicki Wahl, Dena DiFilippo, Norman Shiver, and Michele Rigdon provided assistance to youth as needed during activities. After reviewing Individual Education Programs (student needs) with teachers, the MG leader and staff identified skills that gardening could improve (gross and fine motor skills, opportunities for sensory exploration, confidence and self-esteem, patience and increased responsibility). MG volunteers contributed 631.5 hours and traveled 648 miles supporting this program between August 2013 and July 2015. Activities from Florida Ag-in-the-classroom and the Junior Master Gardener were used. Technical assistance was provided by Julie McConnell, Horticultural Agent, and Paula Davis, 4-H Youth Development Agent.

Program goals included: 1) to teach youth gardening skills, 2) to enable youth to recognize elements for plant growth, and 3) to help youth understand that food comes from farms not the grocery store. Youth participated in gardening activities during 80 school days. They prepared the planting sites, planted vegetable seeds and seedlings, maintained the gardens, harvested the produce and assisted in the preparation of their harvest. Youth also learned about gardening tools and safety. They learned to identify weeds and helped maintain the school Memory Garden. Weeding provided an opportunity for youth to explore soil and plant parts while developing gross and fine motor skills. Youth also learned about wildlife including the life cycle of frogs and butterflies. Activities have been done both in classroom and outdoors. To date there are fourteen 4x4 feet beds and eight 2x4 feet wheelchair accessible beds. To achieve mastery, some of the activities have included hand-over-hand for youth with physical limitations.

Community partners were a valuable part of this project. The following table identifies partners and their role. In addition, seven community volunteers contributed 92 hours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Dollar amount/value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bay County Master Gardeners</td>
<td>Plant/seed donations; gardening supplies including fertilizer, irrigation supplies</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funding for supplies</td>
<td>$1046.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay County Farm Bureau</td>
<td>Grant funding</td>
<td>$498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag-in-the-classroom</td>
<td>Grant funding</td>
<td>$1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama City Women’s Club</td>
<td>Donation</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s Talk Dirt</td>
<td>Soil donation</td>
<td>$90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springfield Nursery</td>
<td>Plants donation</td>
<td>$55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Shipbuilding Group</td>
<td>Designed and built 4 wheelchair accessible planting tables</td>
<td>$4300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Dollar amount/value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Depot</td>
<td>Designed and built 20 raised bed boxes</td>
<td>$7500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seed donation</td>
<td>$1031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$16,520.83</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Because this is an ongoing program, all funds have not been spent. Current funding will support a planned fall vegetable garden. There are also plans to expand the butterfly and herb gardens.

This program was publicized in two articles in local newspapers and the training session for other afterschool programs was publicized for after school volunteers on the county extension website and posted on social media.

**Outcomes/Impacts:** Youth participating in this gardening program have developed patience, improved responsibility, and increased their self-confidence. These activities enabled youth to gain a sense of pride and accomplishment by participating and succeeding in gardening. Youth are proud of their harvest and have shared it with all youth, teachers, staff and a visiting group from the Czech Republic. Garden activities provide opportunities for sensory exploration and practice of inquiry. The physical nature of gardening especially engages students who have trouble sitting still and concentrating in a traditional classroom setting and helps to build gross and fine motor skills. Gardening skills can translate into job skills later in life or become a life-long hobby providing relaxation and recreation. It also is a way to earn praise and recognition for accomplishments as youth have been recognized for their participation in this program during school monthly award ceremonies.

Participants (32) were evaluated using pre/post-test. A tool identification test was developed to determine if youth knew names and purpose of various gardening tools showed a 63% improvement (pre-test score 95, post-test score 155; total possible 195). Ag-in-the-Classroom On the Discovering Florida’s Growing Treasures test, youth had a 175% improvement (pre-test score 100, post-test score 276; total possible 416).

Participating in this program has positive benefits for the youth as can be seen from the following leader/teacher observations:

- After several months in the program, an elementary school student who couldn’t focus on lessons at the start of the school year loves to show off her ability play the plant parts game.
- Initially, several of the 5-7 year olds didn’t want to touch soil. Three months into the gardening project, they made a row and planted carrots and radish seeds.
- A middle school student that wouldn’t touch soil in October planted a Bay leaf tree and chocolate mint in the herb garden within months of participating.
- Since the implementation of Positive Behavior Support (PBS), behavioral problems with some students has been greatly reduced. One example is a student who had extreme anxieties, aggression and felt the need to run away and avoid school activities. He is now motivated to stay engaged in school activities because he can go outside and participate in gardening. This results in less stress for teachers and administration and increased educational opportunities for the student.
- Youth sensitivity to soil must be overcome before they can garden. Initially many would not touch soil even with gloves. Now the majority have their bare hands in the soil. They thrive to
shovel and use a wheel barrow. They are excited about going outside. Teachers are using the
garden as a PBS because the youth place great value on going out with the Master Gardeners.

- An example of motor skill success story is a wheelchair bound student considered profound
(meaning not mobile and has very limited use of body). This girl was able to reach in the
garden, grab the soil and bring it to her face. She had never shown an ability to grab soil or
much else before - a very exciting breakthrough according to the teachers.

- Another student would not touch soil due to sensitivity issues is now planting without gloves. He
also mulches, weeds and has started his own garden off site with adult guidance. He harvested
eggplant, squash, peppers and tomatoes that he is now willing to eat because he grew them. In the
past he would not consider these vegetables an acceptable part of his diet.

- A student whose parents are migrant workers has overcome extreme shyness using the garden as a
vehicle for expression. Before the program, he was extremely shy and relatively
uncommunicative. He is now vocalizing his needs and has found common ground using
kinesthetic learning.

- 93 students learned how to plant seeds and seedlings, water, identify the difference between
weeds and desired plants and pull weeds. All students participated but approximately 45
students participated via hand over hand because of their limited mobility.

Because of their garden success, Habit for Humanity requested assistance with landscaping two
homes. Youth helped plant the front beds using plant material they propagated and additional
donated plants. This program was also selected as a training site for other after school garden
programs. Eleven after school 4-H leaders from five sites attended the training observing the garden
design and irrigation system.

**Program Challenges/Lessons Learned:** These youth have special needs that provided some
unique challenges while implementing the program. Although tools and designs for plant beds are
readily available for horticulture therapy, acquiring these tools is not always easy. Finding tools that
the youth could handle with their limited range of motion was overcome using light weight tools
and by volunteers using hand-over-hand instruction for some students. Additional challenges
included: acquiring wheelchair accessible durable beds and planting tables, identifying and training
volunteers to work with special needs youth, and developing and implementing evaluation tools.

**Executive Summary:** A gardening program was started at MKL School for special needs students.
Gardening is a vehicle students can use throughout their lives. These youth have many physical and
mental barriers they struggle with daily: sensitivity issues, motor skill development, and
engagement are three that this program addresses. The garden provided opportunities for sensory
exploration while the physical nature increased activity and developed motor skills. Gardening also
provided opportunities for youth to demonstrate behavioral change. These skills can translate into
job skills or become a life-long hobby. Youth became more receptive to healthy eating as they ate
their harvest. Through this program, youth know that farmers produce food not the grocery store,
understand that plants need key things to grow as they showed responsible behavior, and have a
positive outdoor related experience. Youth exhibited improved independence and mastery by
developing patience, improving self-confidence, and demonstrating responsibility by growing
plants.
To Whom it May Concern:  

July 27, 2015

This letter is informational and serves to support and describe the Gardening Program at Margaret K. Lewis School. M.K.L. is a center school meeting the academic and functional skill needs for students with disabilities and serves approximately 150 students.

Two years ago Judy Stevens, master gardener and former Bay District employee, had a vision to bring gardening education to our school. It started with seeds taking root in paper towels to a full blown garden today that boasts twenty gardening boxes located behind the school. Students are engaged in every phase of the gardening process. On any given day you will find Ms. Stevens working directly with students and hand-in-hand with staff members to plant, weed, water and harvest. Judy volunteers countless hours to instill in our students a love of gardening. The students harvest a spring and a fall crop. From the garden to the table, our students learn to appreciate home grown fruits and vegetables.

The gardening program continues to grow as the vision embraces even more opportunities for students to become involved in important life skills training embedded with an academic framework that includes content areas like math and science. We look forward to another successful year of gardening at Margaret K. Lewis School.

Sincerely,

Lori Hast  
Deborah Dixon

Support letter 4
To Whom It May Concern:
I am a high school teacher at Margaret K. Lewis School in Panama City, Florida. We have developed an excellent gardening program as part of our science curriculum. This program began at a volunteer level by Judy Stevens, a master gardener, and retired Bay County School District employee.

The gardening program has truly made a difference with our students with autism, as well as the students with other disabilities. The students look forward to planting, growing, harvesting, and eating the crops they grow and take great pride in their gardening skills. We have some students who have sensitivities to different textures, also not wanting to get their hands dirty, but with some effort on the staff’s behalf, nearly 100% of them are now able to touch and smell herbs and get their hands into the dirt without using gloves.

Our gardening program is growing year by year, and we are looking forward to larger raised bed areas to expand our crops, a bird sanctuary, larger herb and butterfly gardens and a worm farm. The program has become very successful and I am excited about the continued opportunities to support the science and gardening education of the school’s students with disabilities.

Sincerely,
Rita Carlson
July 27, 2015

Dear Judy and Bay County Master Gardeners,

I would like to thank you for yet again opening my son Adam’s life up to new and exciting experiences in gardening. It was so helpful to have the garden on the Margaret K. Lewis School campus this year. You and his teachers were able to teach hands on lessons about the life cycle of a plant, the importance of being responsible and to enjoy the fruits of the harvest with the entire school.

The on campus garden was beneficial academically for my son as he learns best from doing an activity like digging in the soil and putting the seed in the earth. Watering the plant and seeing up close the progress as the plants grow and mature into lush and viable food. You and the teachers were able to apply the hands on experience into more tangible classroom science lessons.

Giving Adam (who has Down Syndrome) the responsibility of tending to a garden is very empowering. He is able to physically engage in the process of the life cycle of a plant. He enjoyed being assigned the tasks of weeding, watering and harvesting the plants.

Socially Adam benefited learning that it takes team work to tend the garden with chores of weeding, watering and feeding the plants as they grow. After he and his classmates harvested the variety of vegetables they worked together to wash and cook a meal to share with everyone in the school.

I applaud Judy Stevens and the staff at Margaret K. Lewis School for offering this gardening program and hope that it will be offered again in the upcoming school year.

Sincerely,

Davenie A. Deutsch
Parent of Adam Deutsch, Student at Margaret K. Lewis School
Some of the vegetables grown.

irrigation, raised beds, how to keep youth engaged while participating in outside gardening activities.
Youth planting being assisted by hand-over-hand

Youth getting hands dirty as he prepares soil prior to planting

Youth planted loofah in recycled containers using the palm tree as the trellis.
Airport OKs 2014 budget; passenger numbers dip

by VALERIE GARMAK

PANAMA CITY NEWS HERALD

THURSDAY September 26, 2013

Airport OKs 2014 budget; passenger numbers dip

West Bay — As the fiscal year draws to a close, Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport is starting down its first year of passenger declines since opening in 1989.

With that in mind, the airport board approved a operating and capital budget at a meeting Wednesday, which includes a modest passenger forecast for fiscal year 2014 and a 14 percent increase in operating expenses and a projected 54 percent increase in revenue.

Higher operating expenses for the upcoming year will come from borrowing interest and taxes, purchased services and materials, specifically fueling and oil, and additional costs for the airport's ongoing turf management plan.

Despite decreases in traffic, airport director of administration Pamm Henderson said staff has been able to hold the line on expenses this year. "We've held our expenses to only 87 percent of what was budgeted," said Henderson, citing savings in financial and professional services, airfield and grounds maintenance and personnel. "We've managed to keep the airport operating with a lot less staff and keep our costs down."

Callaway signs off on sidewalk project

by JACQUELINE BOSTICK

PANAMA CITY NEWS HERALD

Callaway — Callaway city commissioners on Tuesday approved a contract with the Florida Department of Transportation for new sidewalks to be installed in its town center area.

At the regular commission meeting, commissioners unanimously approved an agreement with FDOT for a sidewalk project, which calls for 4,649 feet of sidewalks to be installed on 11th Street to State 98, along the west side of Wynn Park Plaza.

FDOT will fund the entire project and Probio-Kish is contracted to engineer the project. Designs are slated to be completed by December 2014.

Larry Johnson, director of public works, called the project "much needed."

Also at the meeting, commissioners heard from several residents supportive of a land-use change from residential to commercial requested by Callaway resident Harold Mangum concerning his parcel at 792 Cherry St.

Mangum's request was not supported by the city's Planning Department staff, however, and the city's Planning Board — an
GARDENING
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by Whitney Somers

Judy is quick to share credit with the 4H and Extension Office who have provided outstanding support for the gardening program. She confesses that she cherishes the opportunity to work with the students and teachers at the school and thinks of them as family. Not long ago, the gardening program was simply “bean seeds placed on wet paper towels to begin to sprout roots”. From this experience, Judy has worked with members of the school to evolve the program to include several raised gardens and pots of loofahs in the courtyard of the school. “The ability for students to use their sense of touch in the garden has allowed many of them to overcome fears and discover talents they did not know they had” stated Principal Loren Hasset.

The team at Margaret K. Lewis plans to sell produce from their gardens and to ultimately make and sell soap to accompanying the loofahs they are growing. In order to use the proceeds to sustain their gardening program and the magic it is providing to their students.

The name of Judy Stevens brings...

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