

Youth Education Year-End Report
By Simar Pawar



Youth Gardeners Project

Fall 2015:

Youth Education reached out to Haslett Area Girl Scouts to adopt a flower bed at Lake Lansing Park South. The idea was to get Girl Scouts connected and involved with their local park. The response was immediate and all positive. Three troops stepped up, along with their families and troop leaders to clean up and plant spring bulbs. The areas that we worked on together were:

- 1) Lake Lansing Bandshell— Adopted by troop #30318
- 2) Donor Sign Bed— Adopted by troop #30568
- 3) Trike Area Tiered Beds— Adopted by troops #30318 & #30568
- 4) Lake Lansing Park Sign (on Marsh Road)— Adopted by troop #30003

Close to four hundred bulbs were planted. Girl Scouts cleaned up debris and vegetation, learned how to use tools, and planted bulbs. At the same time, I took the idea to the Childhood Enrichment Center in Haslett, where the children cleared the stone beds and prepped them for bulb planting. These youth were so dedicated to getting the area ready for bulb planting, that the drivers driving by could not resist from honking and waving to encourage the planting. About thirty bulbs were planted at this location.

All bulbs bloomed this spring, (2016) and a lot of the girl scout families smiled at their labor of love.

Another group of local students helped plant tulips at Lake Lansing Park South raised beds. I am sure most of you enjoyed the tulips, they were planted pink keeping in mind our “Plant it Pink” Project, just as the pink hyacinths were planted at Lake Lansing Park Sign.

If you are wondering how I enchanted the young minds to come and help me, the plan was simple. They all worked for food and goodies. At all sessions, some sort of food was shared with the wonderful workers.

Winter 2015:

In December we learned that the East Lansing Schools Environmental Coordinator needed a local Garden Club to sponsor the “Smoky Bear and Woodsy Owl” poster contest. Our leadership got behind the program and gave me the opportunity to learn about the program from our friends at the Williamston Garden Club. They were very helpful and inclusive in assisting us and even loaning some items to see the event through. The collaboration with the East Lansing City Hall, DNR, and EL Police and Fire Department was phenomenal to encourage the students from White Hills Elementary School. Posters were collected, evaluated, and the winners were selected (and awarded), and participation certificates were presented to all. The DNR gave a talk. Lots of goodies/freebies were handed out. A press release was issued by the East Lansing City Hall coordinator.

**Spring 2016:**

As we awaited for our bulbs to bloom, Arbor Day was knocking on the door, looking for attention. It seemed like it was GO GO GO time. While exploring the needs of the community, and evaluating what options we had to mark Arbor Day, I learned that:

- 1)Seedlings were being handed out at most schools to celebrate Earth Day, which was a week prior to Arbor Day.
- 2)Most students were involved in taking the MME exam the week of Arbor Day.
- 3)Lake Lansing Park, our previous site for Arbor Day, was already planting numerous trees.
- 4)There was a state wide celebration at Potter Park on Arbor Day.
- 5)Harris Nature Center was also holding a celebration.
- 6)Meridian Township was dedicating a tree to volunteers the following week.

Keeping in mind that all this was going on, and still wanting to mark Arbor Day, I drafted a letter to two local educators to make youngsters aware of the tree plantings in the local area and to educate the young minds to be mindful of these young trees and be respectful around them

to give them protected growth years. Two books were donated to two different classrooms, “Tree is Nice” and “We Planted a Tree” adding to their class libraries. Teachers were encouraged to read these books and share them with fellow classrooms. Pencils with a message “Plant Tree, Plant Hope” along with Arbor Day pamphlets on “How to Plant a Tree?” were also shared with these classrooms. Educators were also encouraged to submit any posters made after learning from these books for an opportunity to win ice cream for their classrooms.



Mrs. Schmidt’s class at Wilkshire early Childhood Center jumped on this learning opportunity. Late May, they submitted beautiful posters exhibiting the learners’ connection to and appreciation for trees. Looking at the posters, it is evident that healthy conversation about trees and the environment indeed did happen this Arbor Day. Mrs. Schmidt’s class of twenty-five was presented with ice cream sandwiches.

On Arbor Day (April 29, 2016) with cooperation and permission of “Back Door Gardeners” a ceremonial planting of the Michigan State Tree was included as an activity for young and curious minds learning at the Historical Village about pioneer gardening and celebrating May Day. Seventy-eight kindergarteners participated in this event; all participants received a “Planting a Tree” brochure and pencils.

In May, a planting was done at the Haslett Library. This also involved the “Plant It Pink” Project. After seeking permission from the Haslett School Superintendent, and a donation of three flats of pink petunias from the “Planted Pink” Project, a “READ” sign was created outside of the Haslett Library on Franklin Road. This will be an ongoing project throughout the summer to keep this neat, maintained, and fresh. Clean-up will be done in the fall. CADL gave us a mention on their Twitter page and Facebook Page.

In June, Mrs. Murton’s class at Wilkshire Early Childhood Center was honoring Haslett Beautification Association (HBA) members for their hard work and dedication. I took this opportunity to work with D-Kindergarten children to plant with them in their court yard. HBA

donated two pink hydrangeas supporting the Meridian Garden Club's "Plant It Pink" Project (PIP). On the behalf of Meridian Garden Club, I took in a flat of marigolds that were to be planted as a border in the herb garden by the students. Pink (PIP) zinnia seeds were distributed to all students.

Also in June, coming full circle, the Fall 2015 project became a two step project. The Girl Scout Troops revisited their flower beds and planted approximately twelve flats of annuals at the Lake Lansing Bandshell, Donor Sign, and Trike Area following their "Bridging" Ceremony at Lake Lansing Park South. The scouts enjoyed pizza breadsticks and juice while they worked. The girls were given ice-cream tokens donated by Culvers, vegetable seeds donated by Back Door Gardeners, and zinnia seeds donated by PIP as a token of appreciation.

I feel fortunate, blessed and very grateful for all the support I received from many communities - to name just a few, Meridian Garden Club, Haslett Beautification Association, Lake Lansing Park South and Staff, Haslett Enrichment Center, Haslett Public Schools, CADL Haslett Library Staff, Culvers, Monticello, Vanderburg Bulb Company, Girl Scouts Troops, Leaders, and families, tireless workers of Meridian Garden Club, EL City Hall, "Plant It Pink" Project, Back Door Gardeners, Williamston Garden Club, MSU Horticulture Gardens. The list could go on and on because in a true sense youth education is all about collaboration. It was a humbling and learning year, with very dirty fingernails.

