

# **Jefferson County Master Gardener Volunteer Service Gardening Project Annual Report**

## **Gardening Project: Kid's Garden: Rock Lake Activity Center (RLAC)**

**Submitted by: Jeannie T., MG lead**

Our cool spring with near frost until after Memorial Day certainly slowed us down to get growing. Our garden was tilled and ready to grow! We had some donations of plants from kid's families and friends as well as myself. We moved the location of our garden to hopefully a sunnier spot.

When it finally warmed up we worked hard to get our planting done and watered. We also added some flowers around the edges and someone donated a real whisky barrel cut in 2 for planters which we all decided to place on the edges of the garden on the street side to share with all. They eagerly helped fill with soil and plant.

After we planted our garden - we found a large supply of moving boxes which I hauled with my truck. We cut the cardboard to fit between our rows and beds - then someone donated some bales of straw that they had wrapped with plastic around a building for the winter - most were in good shape and I hauled a load to our garden. We put the straw over the cardboard and that proved to work very well for weed control and help hold the moisture during a dry July and August.

I was assisted by Terri O. when her work schedule permitted as well as the gals that are in charge of the kids program. When things finally warmed up and things started growing, we had had a good supply of vegetables to taste and eat for the snacks and meals at the center and flowers that adorned our garden---zinnias, marigolds, gladiolas, cascading petunias.

After the MGV meeting at Audray W's, I was able to pick up some of the extra plants that the We Grow project at West Elementary had left from their donation from Wal-Mart in Jefferson. We planted these plants in front of our building and around our garden. This was such a nice surprise and enjoyed by all who come to or walk by Rock Lake Activity Center (RLAC).

We have just dug out sweet potatoes (from plants that I bought back from So. IL.). This was something that were seeing if we could grow in our climate – which turned out to be a cool summer – but we did get some potatoes from each of the 3 plants - some on the small side. We have some donations of spring bulbs that we are planting in the front of our building for all to enjoy come spring. It's also time to now clean up our garden and put it to bed for winter.

Diane K. put me in contact with Kathy Braun who donated grow lights and supplies to our garden project which we are looking forward to working with as we move indoors for the winter and plan and grow for our 2015 garden.

Sue Z. did a wonderful job writing a grant application with WIMGVA for a child friendly cart and kid friendly tools - something we so badly need. We are crossing our fingers.

Looking back over 2014 garden session, I guess the weather was one of our biggest challenges - the long cold winter, long cold wet spring and cool dry summer.

We have learned much and I can see the progress measured in the smiles of the children's faces and joy in their voices. The sense of accomplishment when tasting the vegetables that they have grown themselves and enjoying the flowers that they have planted around the garden and building and grounds. The kids have learned how to plant a garden with very little equipment - baler twine and a stake and a lot of enthusiasm - a life skill that they can use the rest of their lives where they may be. In addition to learning how to grow healthy food, they have had the opportunity to be active - enjoying, observing, and learning about nature - being outdoors and teamwork. We look forward to the 2015 Gardening Season.

Now that a few years have passed and we have struggled with little supplies and help, it is wonderful that we as JCMGV are able to network our projects and share our information, supplies and contacts and sooo much more. It's just nice to be able to contact a MGVA and get suggestions and ideas - to me this is an invaluable part of our JCMGVA. The summer tours show us things that MGVA are doing and what they may have a passion for---sources for information and the various projects that everyone is working on and again a source for help and information. I think that this something that sometimes we overlook.