

November Birthdays:

Chris Wujick Nov. 1
Phil Crow Nov. 13
Ginger Hayes Nov. 22



**SEMINOLE
SMOKE
SIGNALS**



ROTARY 2017-2018

Club Number 4289

November 8, 2017

November Anniversaries:

Ruth Berry Nov. 1, 1995 22 years
Troy Mashburn Nov. 1, 2006 11 years
Eva Jones Nov. 10, 2004 13 years
Steve Yudell Nov. 11, 1998 19 years
John Stockfisch Nov. 18, 2015 2 years
Phyllis Stockfisch Nov. 18, 2015 2 years

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Lord, please help us to express our gratefulness to our veterans, and give honor to these military troops from both past and present. Please keep and protect these heroes and their families. Amen.

PROGRAM THIS WEEK: Auction Wrap Up

PROGRAM LAST WEEK: Ricky Butler, Community Programs Manager for the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office

PROGRAM NEXT WEEK: To Be Announced

Upcoming Events:

Dec. 1st: Rotary Christmas Dinner
Dec. 9th: Kids Christmas shopping

Rotary Club of Seminole Officers 2017-2018:

President CJ Morris **Sergeant at Arms** Frank Tanzella
President Elect Ginger Hayes **Bulletin Editor** Jeff Graves/Ruth Berry
Secretary Lorie Whitney **Past President** Bob Matthews
Treasurer Mike McQuilkin
District 6950 Website - www.rotary6950.org
Website - www.seminolerotary.org
Rotary Club of Seminole P.O. Box 3313 • Seminole, FL 33775-3313

THE POWER OF A GARDEN

On a sunny morning in July, two dozen preschool children from Brown Bear Daycare inspect a bed of milkweed plants for monarch butterfly eggs, holding magnifying glasses to the underside of leaves in search of the tiny, off-white objects. Preschool children from Brown Bear Daycare plant a young tomato plant. The class visits the garden every Monday morning spring to fall. Curiosity stoked, the five-year-olds and their teachers move to the shade of a large tree to listen to a master gardener explain the role these butterflies play in gardens. The preschool class visits the community garden in Harvard, Illinois, USA, every Monday from spring to fall to learn about garden-related topics and even help out.



“They get to taste the vegetables, some that they have never even seen. They get to experience what it is like to plant a garden from the planting to the picking to the eating,” says Sheila Henson, executive director of the day care center and a member of the Rotary Club of Harvard. “At the end of the summer, we have a parent night where the parents come and get to see the different things their children have been involved with.”

With the goals of alleviating hunger and educating the community, master gardeners from University of Illinois Extension planted the garden in 2001 on a half-acre parcel donated by the city and adjacent to the public library. Over the years, the master gardeners have enlisted the support of many businesses, organizations, and clubs, including the Rotary Club of Harvard, making the project a community-wide effort.

As many as 250 needy families benefit from the 10,000 pounds of vegetables that are grown and donated every year to the local food pantry. The fresh produce serves as a safety net for many families.

Roughly a quarter of the community’s 9,200 residents live below the federal poverty line, a result of the limited employment opportunities in small farm towns across Illinois. The already fragile economy was further affected by the closing of a Motorola plant here in 2003 after only seven years of operation.

“In this community, the only way we can get by is by helping each other,” says Dave Decker, site director for the Harvard Community Food Pantry. “Everybody needs a little help now and then.”

The Rotary Club of Harvard took on the project seven years ago, looking for a way to address hunger and help the community. With only seven members, the club has had an impact far beyond its size, amplifying its efforts by working with the master gardeners and other groups.

“Harvard is definitely a better place because of the members of this club, and that is what keeps us going,” says Mike Morris, the club’s president. “It’s the expertise of the master gardeners, individuals in the community, farmers who help, and the education provided through the day care that makes this an amazing team effort.”

The Rotary club has provided \$400 to buy seeds and starter plants from a local nursery every year since 2011. It also purchased plastic drip irrigation tubing and fertilizer valves after a drought threatened the garden in 2012. This year, it provided a letter of support needed by the master gardeners to secure a \$5,000 grant from the McHenry County Community Foundation for an organic compost mix that will add nutrients back to the soil and help keep weeds at bay. Morris has made the garden his special focus and enlisted every member of the club to help with planting, weeding, and harvesting. Henson also recruited day care employees to volunteer. The garden needs everyone for planting, says Dale Nelmes, one of the master gardeners who volunteer every week.

“Many of us master gardeners are up there in years and can’t get down on our hands and knees like we used to,” he says. “I was so impressed with Rotary and Sheila, who brought all these young volunteers in. It was incredible how much we accomplished.”

The Harvard Rotarians also used a Rotary grant to buy a new freezer, which allows the food pantry to store vegetables longer.

Last winter, Morris secured another Rotary grant for \$2,000, which, when combined with \$5,000 from club funds, funded seven weeks of food deliveries from the Northern Illinois Food Bank. A mobile unit from the food bank set up at Brown Bear Daycare once a month from October to April, each time distributing 9,000 pounds of meat, vegetables, boxed goods, breads, and fruits.

Morris says growing up on a farm in northwestern Illinois played a big part in his interest in fighting hunger.

“I know we can produce more than enough food to feed everybody in the country,” he says. “It’s just a matter of the logistics of getting it from the farm to their table.”

On a July morning, about 20 people – Rotarians, master gardeners, and community volunteers – are scattered among the 14 rows, each 125 feet long, pulling weeds and picking vegetables. The garden is behind schedule this year because of heavy rains, and today’s harvest is smaller than normal. At the food pantry, Nelmes weighs each crate: 9 pounds of broccoli, 6 pounds of kohlrabi, 8 pounds of peppers, and 22 pounds of zucchini. Later in the season, many more hands will be needed to harvest.

Reina Montes began volunteering at the garden after a back injury forced her to stop working temporarily and she had to go to the pantry to supplement her groceries. When she learned about the garden, she persuaded her daughter, Elizabeth Sanchez, to join her on Mondays to help plant, pick, and weed.

Montes moved to Harvard from Mexico City more than 20 years ago and fell in love with the smaller town. Her daughter now has two college-age daughters of her own, whom she hopes to teach the value of community service.

“Thanks to the garden, we can feed people who can’t afford to buy fresh food at the supermarket,” says Sanchez. “I believe it is everybody’s responsibility to help the community. If our children see that there is unity, love, and support, they are going to do the same thing. We are leaving them a legacy.”