

Founders Fund Committee

The Founders Fund Committee provides monetary awards to projects in local communities proposed by member clubs. Each GCA member club has the privilege of voting for award winners at the GCA Annual Meeting.

Foundersfund@gcamerica.org

[Roster](#)

2012 Founders Fund Finalists

GROWING MINDS AND SPIRITS

Bishop John T. Walker School for Boys (Anacostia) Washington, DC

Proposed by Perennial Garden Club Zone VI

Seconded by Georgetown Garden Club, Zone VI

Photo right: 2011-2012 Perennial Fellow, Mr. Terris King II, with his Kindergarten Class in the outdoor classroom and school entrance, "Embracing Arms." (November 2011)

In a harsh urban environment, one cannot predict the future for an inner-city child; statistics are disturbing. In 2008, Perennial Garden Club (PGC) launched a six-year partnership with the Bishop John T. Walker School for Boys (BWS) in Anacostia, Washington, DC — a tuition-free, elementary school committed to a strong, values-based education for boys growing up in the precarious shadow of the U.S. Capitol — with intentions to reverse expectations. PGC designed an educational landscape introducing children to the natural world and the importance of caring for nature's gifts.



PGC has completed construction of "Embracing Arms," an outdoor classroom with stone paths and seat walls that greet students daily as they walk among native perennials. Program sustainability is provided through the appointment of a BWS teacher as Perennial Fellow, who annually attends American Horticulture Society training and serves as mentor to the Parents Gardening Committee and faculty. PGC offers a model plan to other organizations so that they, too, can foster "minds and spirits to grow."



The Founders Fund Award will enable PGC to build the Living Classroom, providing spaces and tools to integrate school curriculum with nature and to nurture future stewards of the environment as they reap the rewards of beauty, flowers, food and wildlife. How will the Living Classroom touch the life of each boy? Will gathering water from rain barrels or growing their own vegetables rouse wonder? Will the green roof on the potting shed beckon understanding of how storm water harms the Anacostia River? Will digging

in the worm pit, feeling the softness of *Stachys byzantia* or painting at in-ground easels inspire? Will watching butterflies, checking the weather station, peeking in birdhouses or sharing their flowers with a nearby senior center stir their spirits? One can only imagine how experiencing nature will serve the boys — and how this investment can make an impact.

Photo left: The original site of the Living Classroom at BWS in Anacostia, one of the most underserved communities in Washington, D.C. (2008)

SERENITY PARK: A HEALING OASIS

Gateway Community Services Jacksonville, FL

Proposed by Late Bloomers Garden Club Zone VIII

Seconded by Cherokee Garden Club, Zone VIII

Photo right: Bleak courtyard in the midst of a residential and outpatient rehabilitation center.

The Late Bloomers Garden Club, Jacksonville, Florida, has committed to create a Serenity Park to replace a bleak courtyard in the midst of a residential and outpatient rehabilitation center. Gateway Community Services, housed in a former motel, provides vital drug and alcohol rehabilitation services for more than 200 adults and adolescents daily. Gateway's outstanding reputation and hope-filled mission stand in stark contrast to its discouraging setting.



There is a great need for a healing oasis where residents can go for solace, or walk and sit with their mentors or family members as they struggle to work through the critical problems they are facing. Residents now have only the sterile public cafeteria for such visits. With an average of 30 children residing with their mothers at any given time, there is also a vital need for an active children's play area.



This project is proving to be a dynamic catalyst. The Gateway Foundation board has voted to proceed with a new children's daycare building bordering the Serenity Park and have secured funding from a local foundation. One of the vocational training programs offered to men in transition from the drug rehab program is yard maintenance, and the garden will serve as a training facility, thereby providing perpetual upkeep of the garden at no additional expense to the center.

Phase One will soon be underway and large trees will be planted around the fence line. A meandering walkway will encircle the grounds, with an open green space in the center for evening volleyball games. Semi-private, quiet garden "rooms" with benches will grace the three outer corners, and a creative, natural playground will complete the fourth.

This green space will stimulate the revitalization of the surrounding blighted neighborhood and demonstrate our commitment to improving our community.

Photo left: A meandering walkway with large trees is planned to camouflage fence and garbage dumpster, and control parking.

LIVINGLEARNING ROOF

The Green Roof Educational Project

Proposed by Cedar Rapids Garden Club Zone XI

Seconded by Garden Club of Barrington, Zone XI

Photo right: Artist's rendering of the new Cedar Rapids Public Library, which will achieve the highest Leadership in Energy and Economic Design (LEED) rating of Platinum.



The horrific flood of 2008 devastated the Cedar Rapids Community and destroyed the Cedar Rapids Library. An assessment revealed more than 50 percent damage to the library, and a mandatory evacuation order was issued. As a result of catastrophic circumstances, Cedar Rapids had an unprecedented opportunity to build a new 94,000 square-foot library, featuring a 25,000 square-foot green roof.

The LivingLearning Roof will be a destination point in the newly revitalized business and cultural hub of the community ... a functioning space for the education and enjoyment of all its patrons. The living system of soil, compost, and plants will be arranged with seating, providing visitors with a great view and multiple opportunities to learn state-of-the art environmental practices to apply in their own lives. Interpretive signs will describe how roof-top plants — and the dirt and gravel



holding them — help cool Cedar Rapids, clean the air, build habitat, and manage storm water. With hands-on learning, these critical issues will remain at the top of their minds. With more than 1,600 visitors per day, and estimated 500,000 per year, our library will be a beacon of light for current and future generations, both young and old. The library will reach out to those patrons who are currently under-served by library services. Several children's service agencies will offer shared programming from this accessible location, making this collaboration even more effective.

Because the new Cedar Rapids Library with its LivingLearning Roof is a unique model of innovation, practicality, and stewardship, it can be replicated successfully in other communities. The partnership of the Cedar Rapids Garden Club, its fundraising efforts, and the generous donations of GCA members will make the LivingLearning Roof a reality.

Photo left: This potential design concept features digital, interactive, educational sign that would show how water is collected and flows from two 5,000-gallon cisterns, providing irrigation for plant material on the green roof

