



Spring Opening at Millville's  
Wildlife Garden

At the end of 2016, CU Maurice River received funding from the Holly City Development Corporation (HCDC) to beautify an otherwise vacant lot by turning it into a Neighborhood Wildlife Garden. This urban-greening project is part of a Neighborhood Improvement Grant Program led by HCDC, which supports efforts aiming to improve the quality of life within the Center City neighborhood and to provide community building opportunities. In this light, for the last two years CU Maurice River has been working closely with The City of Millville, schools, downtown residents, community organizations, and local businesses to develop an outdoor living space for everyone's enjoyment.

One driving force behind this project was Karen Williams, owner of Flora for Fauna and CU Maurice River Naturalist, who donated her professional expertise and guidance to this project's design and installation. The Neighborhood Wildlife Garden landscape is complete with native and wildlife-friendly plants that are highly beneficial for butterfly, moth, bee, and bird populations. These types of greening projects can positively impact urban environmental health by reducing heat-island effects, bettering air quality, and protecting water resources. They have also been reported to support economic growth, reduce crime, and strengthen community health and well-being. This public space is located at 213 N. Third Street in Millville and is open from dawn until dusk. We invite you to take a stroll, relax, and experience the benefits of native plantings while also enjoying the beauty of a garden created by the community.

From the project's outset neighbors, volunteers, and community organizations have shown their support through action. They conducted neighborhood surveys, chose plants, cleaned the lot of debris and litter, prepared garden beds, laid a woodchip path, led educational workshops, germinated seeds, raised plants, planted numerous native flower, shrub and tree species, installed split-rail fencing, as well as watered and weeded.

Throughout the process, CU Maurice River volunteers have been there guiding and working alongside the participants.

So far volunteers have dedicated about 1,000 hours to the project's success. Our organization tracks hours, but neighbors are also going the extra mile to care for the garden on their own time. For instance before water was installed two years ago, we had several trays of plants that were grown by students and needed to be planted. Despite thinking they would die without the necessary water, we were between a rock and a hard place and decided to plant the flowers. Whenever we visited thereafter, volunteers were astounded at how well the little moon-shaped bed was doing in the summer heat. Unbeknownst to us a neighbor from an adjacent property had taken it upon herself to water the plants and weed. She later related that after observing the neighborhood children planting at the garden she couldn't bear to see the plants shrivel away. Today the little bed Lillian cared for is one of the garden's healthiest.

Since the first plants took root, many stories of garden's incorporation into community life have been passed on to CU Maurice River. SHINE Ministries' participants decided to include the garden in their litter patrols. One neighbor took it upon himself to mow grassy sections prior to their transformation into gardens.

Another helps maintain the hell-strip between the sidewalk and the street. One of our favorite stories, is that of a young couple who decorated the pergola and had their wedding pictures taken there. These are just a few examples of the sense of community that keeps this garden growing in every way.

In celebration of the volunteerism and partnerships that have transformed this once vacant lot, CU Maurice River members hosted a Spring Opening at the Neighborhood Wildlife Garden on Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Over 60 visitors spent an afternoon in the garden, including many neighbors, a Girl Scout troop from Millville, SHINE Ministries, as well as students and teachers from Lakeside Middle School and Silver Run Elementary. Some came to simply take in the serenity of a garden environment, while others painted and created a mobile craft with help from Diane Roberts of the Renaissance Center for the Arts. Children enjoyed a scavenger hunt while adults assisted in this nature quest. Many visitors also planted native flowers and signed up to receive more information on how to get involved. If you would like to request more information or to join us in the garden, please email [CitizenUnited@CUMauriceRiver.org](mailto:CitizenUnited@CUMauriceRiver.org).

CU Maurice River is grateful to the City of Millville Officials who were in attendance

including Mayor Michael Santiago, Commissioner Udalovas, and Manager of Parks and Public Property Samantha Cruz. The City has been a willing and active supporter of this project from the beginning. We would also like to thank all of the corporate donors and community partners whose generosity allowed us to grow this project in scope and reach. They are:

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