

## **Springfield-Greene County Parks and Greene County Extension: A Powerful Partnership**

This is a list of ways that Greene County Extension staff interacts with Parks and the Botanical Center with a specific emphasis on efforts that benefit Parks. The primary University of Missouri Extension specialists involved in making these things happen in Greene County are: David Burton, Kelly McGowan, Pam Duitsman, Patrick Byers, Jeff Barber and Renette Wardlow. Specialists from adjoining counties can be brought to Springfield to work on educational programs related to agriculture, 4-H youth, family finances, nutrition and business development.

- 1. Greene County Extension trains valuable volunteers and builds the leadership for all partners at the Springfield Botanical Gardens.**
  - a. Our Master Gardener program annually trains 50 volunteers who then volunteer a minimum of 30 hours annually back to the community.
    - i. In 2015, our 225 Master Gardeners contributed 22,671 documented volunteer hours maintaining various gardens at the Springfield Botanical Gardens at a value of \$501,935 according to the Point of Light Foundation.
    - ii. Our volunteers also answered over 6,000 questions at the hotline and many of those were for people who visited the Botanical Center and Park in person.
    - iii. Our Master Gardeners are very involved in the construction of new gardens and upkeep in the demonstration garden, a favorite in the park. Without their volunteer work, maintain the gardens would be up to Parks staff.
  - b. Greene County Extension also annually trains Master Naturalists and our 94 local members reported over 7,000 volunteer hours worked during 2015, some at the Springfield Botanical Gardens.
  
- 2. Greene County Extension programs and staff strengthen Friends of the Garden.**
  - a. Nearly all of the MU Extension trained Master Gardeners become FOG members who do additional work in the park with FOG and help fund Park needs.
    - i. All of the primary leadership for FOG, including all past presidents and the current executive director, got their start as Master Gardeners.
    - ii. Four of our Extension staff currently serve on the Board of Directors for FOG.
  - b. Our horticulture educator is a position partnership with FOG that strengths both FOG volunteers and project coordination and MU Extension programs
  
- 3. Greene County Extension contributes significantly to the marketing and promotion of the Springfield Botanical Gardens and the programs taking place there.**
  - a. Greene County Extension leads the state in media impressions for MU Extension programs and FOG and Parks benefit from that media and marketing effort.
    - i. Annual research shows that Extension generates over \$2.5 million in media coverage annually, with most of that being centered in the Springfield market.
    - ii. We also have over 50,000 social media followers that we engage weekly and in each of these situations, we promote the Springfield Botanical Gardens.
    - iii. Greene County Extension provides a significant marketing and promotion for both Parks and FOG programs. We estimate this to be in excess of \$50,000.

- iv. MU Extension specialists have two live interview spots on KOLR each week and we often use this air time to promote Parks and FOG events taking place at the Botanical Center which helps increase event attendance.
    - b. All flyers and publications that advertise MU Extension programs in Greene County also promote parks and the Springfield Botanical Gardens as sponsors.
      - i. In partnership with Parks, all of the appropriate logos are used.
      - ii. Parks is listed as one of our corporate sponsors.
    - c. Monthly we reach thousands of county residents with our Extension newsletter and we have a standard ad in it regarding space rentals at the Botanical Center.
- 4. Nearly all of the educational programs taking place at the Botanical Center are conducted by MU Extension specialists and trained volunteers.**
  - a. This offering of public education via extension is one of the main reasons Greene County Extension was originally admitted as a partner in the Botanical Center.
  - b. This includes annual programming like our Organic Gardening Academy, Private Pesticide Applicator Training, Potting Shed University, MoGardens and many Farm to Table types of programs.
  - c. Our Master Gardeners, with help from Extension staff, originated several of the key festivals that take place in the park. (Butterfly Festival, Youth Sprouts).
  - d. Annually we conduct programs that are part of the regional food council and an extension led effort to create a regional food hub.
    - i. The fact that those efforts originate from the Botanical Center match perfectly with the mission of the building in the community.
    - ii. As regional food efforts grow, more organizations identify it as growing out of the Botanical Center because of the meetings taking place there.
    - iii. These programs at the Botanical Center include Greene County Extension's Seeds of Prosperity, Farm to Table, and our Grow Your Farmer program.
  - e. Extension offers curriculums for many different programs that have frequently been requested by Parks staff for use in other areas.
    - i. Other program partnerships may exist, we just need to work together to identify those needs and the resources to provide them.
    - ii. We can draw specialists from adjoining counties to conduct programs.
- 5. Our educational efforts also strengthen other partners that are part of the Springfield Botanical Gardens.**
  - a. One extension specialist has served as a consultant to the Friends of Gray-Campbell Farmstead and the Liberty School project for over a decade.
    - i. Our extension specialist continues to train volunteers, advise and provide resources to make the greatest use of these historic resources and to drive attendance upward.
    - ii. Curriculum and historic resources for Liberty Schools have been made available by Greene County Extension
    - iii. Grants have been and continue to be written to expand the educational programming that can take place at Liberty School.
  - b. Extension staff and volunteers provide horticulture training for other garden clubs that partner with the Springfield Botanical Gardens.

- c. Even the non-gardening Extension programs are encouraged to interact with Parks if they do volunteer work. Examples include:
  - i. 4-H Clubs that host meetings in the building do volunteer work at the park.
  - ii. By having events at the Botanical Center, we can introduce youth from all over the county to this great parks facility.

**6. Greene County Extension programs drive attendance to the Botanical Center and provide resources and training for Parks staff.**

- a. Extension staff gets our visitors to interact with Parks resources.
  - i. Soil testing services offered to the public bring 500 new county residents to the park annually and provides an environmental need.
  - ii. When we do small educational programs, we direct attendees to the gift shop for drinks and food.
- b. Extension specialists have provided training for parks employees and maintenance crews related to all types of gardening, turf and event tree issues at no cost.
- c. We strive to be good partners with Parks staff and FOG and often arrange for building get-together and events to help build relationships.
- d. Greene County Extension has drawn several state conferences and workshops to the Botanical Center that rented space.
- e. Extension staff oversees plant labeling at the Springfield Botanical Gardens.
  - i. Equipment was jointly funded by Master Gardeners.
  - ii. Names on the labels are approved by Extension approved to have uniformity and consistency throughout the parks system.
- f. Master Gardener programs generate income for Parks.
  - i. Starting in 2015, Master Gardeners began doing class registration for their public classes through the Parks office.
  - ii. When Parks does the registration, profits on the class are split 50/50 between Parks and Master Gardeners.

**7. Greene County Extension was an important partner in planning, funding and furnishing the Botanical Center.**

- a. Greene County Extension was an original member of the planning and design team for the Botanical Center with Parks, even before other groups existed.
  - i. This process began 20 years ago.
  - ii. Committee members tell me that the purpose of the committee was to create a new home for Greene County Extension.
  - iii. Extension helped pass a sales tax and part of that tax included a promise of office and classroom space for Greene County Extension.
- b. Greene County Extension helped with funding and furnishing.
  - i. Raised nearly \$100,000 for the building and deposited those funds with FOG.
  - ii. Greene County Extension provided all of its own office furnishings.
  - iii. Purchased the chairs and table for the conference room.
  - iv. Provided all tables and chairs for the workshop studio.
  - v. Provided all of the classroom style tables for the large meeting room.
- c. Extension was supported in its move to the Botanical Center by a partnership with the Greene County Commission which provided \$400,000 for the space.