

PHILANTHROPY

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GLENDALE GARDENS & WOODLAND:

Connecting people to plants

“No where else can we find the joy that beauty brings,” writes Irish philosopher John O’Donohue. “At Glendale Gardens & Woodland hundreds of volunteers who create and maintain 28 demonstration gardens and a conservation area experience this joy every day. It represents their sweat and passion over the last 29 years that have transformed 103 acres of farmer’s fields into a world-class, public garden just nine kilometres from downtown Victoria.

“Glendale provides a social connection for volunteers in a beautiful setting, and a healthy recreation activity for our regulars,” says Head Gardener Michael Dowling. Among the master gardener volunteers and ecology experts are volunteers from Canada World Youth and the Garth Homer Society. The Garth Homer volunteers have their own area where they have cleared invasive species, planted native trees and bushes and created and maintain a trail system.

Working with clients from the Garth Homer Society is Dowling’s pet project. He sees the value in providing an experience for independence, growth and participation in the community with people who strive to overcome developmental and physical obstacles.

“We have recently set up a picnic table in their woodland and they are creating a sign which will name the garden as their own. They are thinking of names like “Serenity Garden” or “Oasis”, which just shows you what this experience means to them.”

A grant from the Victoria Foundation made it possible to buy a golf cart and create wheelchair friendly pathways to increase access for those with physical disabilities. Not only did it make the gardens accessible to visitors but volunteers as well. “We had volunteers in

wheelchairs that were in the office every week for many years and had never actually visited the garden,” says Dowling.

“If our slogan is Connecting People to Plants, then it is clear that our task is not only to be accessible, but to have the resources to reach out to educate and involve new groups and individuals,” states Kari Frazer, Director of Development. In addition to groups from Canada World Youth and Garth Homer Society, volunteers also come from the Royal Oak Rotary, John Howard Society, the Single Parents Resource Centre and Reynolds High School. Often, the participants are youth or disadvantaged. “They are ready and willing to be connected with plants, but often they do not have the tools or knowledge to get started.”

That is where Glendale Gardens needs donor support. Volunteers need proper gloves, footwear and tools to work in the conservation area, haul rocks or battle weeds. Equipment purchases such as a commercial lawn mower and a tractor are also high on the wish list.

“We can choose to be only a professionally run garden with six paid gardeners, or continue to create and maintain demonstration gardens with one full-time gardener and the participation of hundreds of volunteers,” says Frazer.

“The board is grateful for the support of the Victoria Foundation,” says Ron Cox, Board Vice-President and Chair of the Development Committee. “Support from individual donors, foundations and corporations allows Glendale to deliver on its mission.”



Photos contributed



Volunteer efforts and community support allow Glendale Gardens and Woodland to fulfill its goal of connecting people to plants.

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A charitable fund at the Victoria Foundation enables you to benefit the community forever with a permanent endowment. With investment earnings from your gift you can make grants to address community needs. Your gift - and its future earnings - is a source of permanent community capital. It just makes sense.

Isn't it time we worked together?

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