

2016 Youth Category Update – Meredith Kurzhal

January 2016 Executive Committee Meeting

2015

New School Gardens:

2015 was an extremely 'reactionary' type of year for school gardens. Sue was inundated with new school and community garden requests after the SHIP grants were awarded. Bob Strawn spent a RIDICULOUS amount of time running around with various other volunteers to share the Square Foot Gardening presentation with schools and community gardens across both counties, both presenting the idea as well as implementing it in the actual gardens. Sue, Bob & myself attended countless meetings to determine the viability of such requests, further research requests, and the list goes on. This was an extremely daunting situation to not only keep up with all the incoming requests, but to try and organize help because the gardens were at so many different levels: different levels of size, different levels of purpose, different levels of people involved (school officials vs parents vs employees etc.), different levels of time constraints, different levels of experience, different levels of volunteers, etc. It was music to my ears to know that this has now become its own Committee.

Lessons In A Bag

I formed a committee of volunteers in early 2015 that worked extremely hard to create FANTASTIC Lessons In a Bag to share with our group of Youth volunteers. We stayed within budget and have copies of the lessons available at both county offices. The original 'check out' system was not successful, so I will be working with the offices to determine a better method, one that we can better track usage. Volunteers from the Youth Category successfully used them last year, so they were worth the time and \$ we spent on them. Now, we just need to make sure everyone else knows they are available.

Committee Vacancies

Before I accepted the role of Chair, there were already a large number of Youth Category vacancies. We continue to have these vacancies which I hope to fill as the year goes on. I don't feel I know our group that well, and hope that reaching out again and actively calling for help, particularly at upcoming monthly meetings, will help.

2016

Prioritize and Organize:

Following the ideas and goals of our 2016-2018 Strategic Plan, I plan to spend time organizing and prioritizing the Youth Projects.

I will work with Committee Chairs to ensure easy sign-ups with emailed instructions and protocol for Youth opportunities along with reminders of support on topics and resources from the Lessons In a Bag and Displays. Opportunities that were led from people like Georgia Storms were so easy to WANT to sign up for, you never had questions of what was expected from, or what, where and when you were supposed to volunteer. This should allow for more focused opportunities and sign-ups, more confidence in what/how to present, and should ideally lead to a higher % of filled volunteer slots for the year.

New School Gardens/SHIP grants:

Now that there is a new listing on the Org Chart for these ongoing requests, this should help to streamline future opportunities and volunteers.

Lessons In a Bag:

I am working with Nancy Guldberg to add our Lessons In a Bag to the website to be located where the Displays and PowerPoints are currently.

I will work with the 2 offices to re-vamp the 'check-out' system for the Lessons.

I will check to make sure the lessons have enough supplies after being used in 2015.

Volunteers from the Youth Category successfully used them last year, so they were worth the time and \$ we spent on them. By re-vamping the 'check out' system, I hope to be able to better track the success to be reported in 2017.

School Garden 101:

Unless we can find someone else willing to head this, I will need to push it to March of 2017. I know I do not have the time to launch what I would consider a successful first run. There are a lot of moving parts with location, invitations, timing and follow up that I know I cannot commit to for this spring. If someone else wanted to head this up, I can share all the information that Sue and I have compiled and provide guidance. Otherwise, I would like to work on solidifying the details this fall (2016) for a post-Schoolyard Garden Conference launch in March of 2017.

2017

Lessons In a Bag:

Review their use through the new 'check out' system. Pending their success as determined by use in 2016, we will look to add 2-3 more timely topics in 2017. Perform an annual check of supplies and wear & tear analysis.

Survey the Youth Volunteers to determine if there are any ideas, suggestions or concerns.

School Garden 101:

If this has not been solidified or completed in 2016, launch a School Garden 101 Curriculum to be delivered immediately following the Schoolyard Garden Conference in March of 2017. Items to be determined in Fall of 2016 include a location to host, list of invitees, list of speakers and follow up protocol.