

INsight

GDABVI News and Information



Innovative partnership spurs creation of Sensory Garden

After more than a year in the making, the Greater Detroit Agency for the Blind and Visually Impaired (GDABVI) and the The Greening of Detroit unveiled a unique new garden that piques the senses of smell, taste and touch. Made possible with the generous support of the Carls Foundation, the Sensory Garden further beautifies Detroit's West Side while providing GDABVI clients an opportunity to utilize and develop their sensory skills.

"This is an excellent example of how nonprofits can collaborate in innovative ways," said GDABVI President & CEO Gail McEntee. "Our organizations would seem to have missions that aren't necessarily compatible, but they really are. We both want to make metro Detroit a better place for everyone, be they sighted or visually impaired."

The Greening of Detroit President Rebecca Salminen Witt added, "We want to motivate people throughout the area to help improve our ecosystem and enjoy the natural environment. GDABVI's lovely garden was designed to provide an ideal place for individuals who are blind and visually impaired to explore their environment."

The garden is being utilized to teach children who are blind and visually impaired how to develop sensory skills while exploring science and nature. Other GDABVI clients, along with visitors and staff, are enjoying the garden and will continue to do so for years to come.

GDABVI thanks the Carls Foundation for its commitment to southeast Michigan and its support of the project. GDABVI also thanks The Greening of Detroit for its hard work in making such a wonderful collaboration possible.

A very special thank you goes out to volunteers from MAS Youth, a division of the Muslim American Society that prepares young people to be at the forefront of development in their communities. Their tremendous effort played a key role in the planting of the garden.

If you wish to visit the GDABVI Sensory Garden, or would like more information about any other items contained in this newsletter, please contact Rob Boyle at 313-272-3900 or boyle@gdabvi.org.



Board members Tim Daniel, Fred Simpson (Chairman), Carlos Mejia, Outreach Coordinator Mary Beth Kullen and students from GDABVI's Summer Enrichment Camp were on hand for the Sensory Garden ribbon cutting ceremony in late July.

Children learn valuable skills at Summer Enrichment Camp

In its fourth consecutive year, the GDABVI Summer Enrichment Camp has given children between the ages of six and 15 an opportunity to participate in activities chosen specifically to develop important life skills. GDABVI thanks all of the individuals and organizations that supported its Summer Enrichment Camp through direct contributions and the *Detroit Free Press* Summer Dreams grant program.

Camp activities included shopping at a department store, preparing food and picnicking at Campus Martius Park. All Summer Enrichment activities are chosen to help children develop greater independence and social interaction skills, as well as give them a greater sense of their own potential.

In June, the agency also offered a one-week Goalball camp. Created in Austria in the late 1940s, Goalball is a team sport designed specifically for athletes who are blind, with partially sighted participants wearing blindfolds.



Judo is an opportunity to exercise, but also to develop orientation and mobility skills, along with balance, posture and spatial awareness.

“Children with visual impairments have unique learning needs that exceed school year programs,” says Mary Beth Kullen, GDABVI Community Outreach Coordinator. “Our summer programming focuses on these needs, and also encourages kids to explore the community we live in.”

Foundation to support teens on the road to independence



For the first time, GDABVI is offering a program this fall that will help teens with visual impairments learn how to live on their own. Made possible in part through the generous support from the Delta Sigma Theta Detroit Foundation’s Jerrylee Johnson Memorial Fund, the program will guide young people through a process of finding and moving into an apartment.

The program, *Independent Living in the Real World: Getting Started*, will take into account such needs as access to bus routes, appropriate lighting and aids that are available to persons who are blind and visually impaired. It also focuses on moving, budgeting and furnishing.

“The program is designed to give young people who are about to enter adulthood a clearer sense of how to be independent,” says Community Outreach Coordinator Mary Beth Kullen.

Delta Sigma Theta Detroit Foundation’s Jerrylee Johnson Memorial Fund was established to continue the legacy of Ms. Johnson, who was teacher in the Detroit Public Schools for more than 30 years, as well as a tireless volunteer and community activist. She passed away in 2005 at the age of 104.

GDABVI thanks the Delta Sigma Theta Detroit Foundation for its support and is proud to be associated with the legacy of Ms. Johnson.

Volunteer Spotlight— Jacqueline Ingram

Jacqueline Ingram was excited to become a volunteer member of The Greening of Detroit/ GDABVI Sensory Garden Planning Committee, but she brought more than just enthusiasm to the meetings. As a woman who is visually impaired, she was able to provide her perspective on elements of a garden that would have meaning to her.

Jacqueline, who lives a little over a mile away from GDABVI's offices, would walk to meetings. She is the epitome of independence for blind and visually impaired individuals and is an inspiration to everyone she meets.

When planting day finally arrived, Jacqueline set aside her white cane and began digging, placing pavers and putting in ground cover.

"It was really a wonderful experience," says Jacqueline, who shared her thoughts at the Sensory Garden unveiling ceremony in July. "I think it's a blessing that I can put things into the ground for others to appreciate."



Jacqueline Ingram (pictured center) with GDABVI Board Chair Fred Simpson, President & CEO Gail McEntee, Greening of Detroit President Rebecca Salminen Witt and Raymond J. Solomon from Mayor Kilpatrick's office.

GDABVI Rehabilitation Services help adults and seniors

Rehabilitation teaching helps those who are blind or visually impaired live independently. GDABVI offers assessment, counseling and training to adults and seniors in the comfort of their own homes. Instruction includes communication skills and the teaching of Braille, as well as daily living skills such as food preparation, money management and use of appliances.

GDABVI professional staff conducts more than 1400 home visits annually at no charge to clients. If you know of an adult or senior who is legally blind and may benefit from GDABVI's services, you can contact the Agency at 313-272-3900 or info@gdabvi.org.

GDABVI Welcomes Robert Boyle

We are pleased to announce that Robert Boyle has joined GDABVI as Director of Development and Communications. Rob has more than 15 years combined marketing, communications and development experience in the nonprofit and for-profit sectors.

Most recently, he worked at United Way for Southeastern Michigan, where he held positions in communications and fund development, as well as managing a grant program that helped nonprofits plan capital improvements. Rob has also been a news contributor and music host on Detroit Public Radio, WDET-FM.

Graduating *Cum Laude* from Wayne State University, Rob holds a BA in Political Science with concentrated coursework in English/Film Studies.



Thank you for supporting our mission to increase the self-reliance and dignity of men, women and children throughout southeast Michigan who are blind and visually impaired.

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The Greater Detroit Agency for the Blind and Visually Impaired (GDABVI) provides quality, innovative services that increase self-reliance, productivity and dignity for persons who are blind or visually impaired.

GDABVI provides in-home rehabilitation services to adults and seniors, community education programs on eye health and safety, summer programming for children and youth, and Accessible Computer Training at regional libraries for the blind.

GDABVI, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, is a United Way partner agency accredited by the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped.

If you would like to learn more about GDABVI programs and services, or would like to donate or volunteer, please call 313-272-3900 or visit our website at www.GDABVI.org.

Planned giving lasts beyond a lifetime

A planned gift to GDABVI provides meaningful impact to men, women and children who are blind and visually impaired. It can also bring immediate and deferred tax advantages to you and your heirs.

If you have named GDABVI as a beneficiary in your estate planning, please let us know. We want to keep you informed about the programs you care most about. More importantly, we'd like to thank you.

If you would like more information about making a planned gift, please contact Gail McEntee at 313-272-3900.



**Greater Detroit Agency
for the Blind and Visually Impaired**
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