

GREEN HOUSE VENTURE

**GHV**

# CAMPUS NEWS



photo by Jack Connaghan

## SPRING HAS SPRUNG AT THE GHV

The GHV Embankment Greenway is bursting with color and blooming with indigenous flowers and plants placed there to rejuvenate the vital pollinator population of bees and butterflies.

Teeming with activity, there are dozens of people, including students from our Urban Education Alliance, Missouri Master Gardeners and others all working together to bring the Terrace Garden to life.

The work that's been accomplished on the Greenway is a tribute to the vision of the Federal Highway Commission in its 2015 directive to use interstate highway margins to help restore pollinators across the country.

The summer will see even more growth, and we look forward to the fall semester with hopes of bringing next year's crop of students together to participate in our remarkable Ambassadors Program.

# DENNIS PURKIS

*GHV Treasurer & Board Director*

The Green House Venture recently added another exceptional member to our Board of Directors. He's Dennis Purkis, who also now serves as the Venture's new Treasurer.

Dennis has over 23 years of experience providing accounting tax and advisory services to not-for-profits, businesses, start-ups, and individuals. His expertise is rooted in accounting, auditing, and consulting services that have grown and evolved over the years to support his clients in virtually every aspect of financial management, as well as process controls and operating efficiencies.

"I am excited to be part of a very unique and interesting concept that brings collaboration and scale to schools and students in the community," says Dennis about the Green House Venture. "Much effort has been made to establish this outstanding program, and I am honored to be afforded the opportunity to contribute as the GHV pursues the vision of a STEM Education Center in the heart of the City."

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## THE LEARNING CURVE STUDENTS RETURN TO LEARN

*by Donald Stump Curriculum Director*

This spring, the Curriculum Committee began to hope that, after two years of Covid lockdowns at our partner schools, we might soon be back in business. It seemed at least possible that, in the fall, we might resume our Classroom Outreach and After-School Programs, and we began to plan.

Now, to be clear, the fallow years of the pandemic had been remarkably productive for the Venture. Focusing on finishing our 3.7-acre Embankment Greenway along Interstate 44 and developing the architectural design of our long-awaited Education Center across the street, we laid the groundwork for launching a \$6 million capital campaign to build, equip, and operate it. Sadly, though, our only time with children had been a couple of weeks last May, when we were able to bring classes out of their Covid "bubbles" into the sunshine along the Embankment Greenway for brief outings to look for native Missouri plants and talk about the native ground-dwelling bees that depend on them.

This May, when more ambitious field trips and more sustained learning opportunities seemed possible, we devised a series of 45-minute outings to start in May and end in October. Teachers are to bring classes to the Embankment Greenway either to learn to identify major families of plants by searching for instances along the Greenway, or to explore the processes of germination and early development by planting and cultivating crops in the Terrace Garden. As the growing season progresses, students will then return to push deeper into the science involved and will end the series by gathering wild seeds or harvesting the crops they have grown.





## THE LEARNING CURVE CONTINUED

To pilot the series this May, students joined us from eight classes at St. Margaret of Scotland School and Tower Grove Christian Academy. Led by nine volunteer instructors from the Venture and the Missouri Master Gardeners, more than 140 students took part, some learning to identify the two major classes of flowering plants (monocots and dicots) and others learning to plant bush beans and pumpkins while exploring the internal biology of seeds and the stimuli that initiate germination.

The outings were a great success. As one teacher wrote afterwards, “Our fifth graders enjoyed their time and learned a lot... Many students are already excited to walk by this summer to check out their beans and pumpkins with their families.”

We're looking forward to the next round of field trips in the fall.

For making the May outings a success, we are grateful for the constant support of principals Christine Burke and Elizabeth Hoelker and the concerted efforts of our partner organization, the Missouri Master Gardeners.

Special thanks to my co-organizer, Rebecca Penniman, who (among other things) wrote lesson plans, helped develop handouts, organized the Master Gardeners, and conducted practice teaching sessions.

Thanks, as well, to Bill Anderson (a Venture Board Member and head of Environmental Studies and Chemistry at SLU High School) and to Rick Kacenski (the landscape architect who designed the Greenway and Terrace Gardens for volunteering to teach in the sessions, and to Jack Connaghan (Venture Secretary, Photographer, and Master of Watering) for his faithful assistance along the way.





# MASTER GARDENERS WORKING ON THE GHV EMBANKMENT GREENWAY

Among the many groups that have made invaluable contributions to the Venture's Embankment Greenway, St. Louis Master Gardeners ranks high on the list.

One of the organization's members, Holly Records, recalls her reaction when she first heard about GHV. "When I was asked if I would be interested in a new project that involved a highway embankment, I was more than a little skeptical," Holly said. Fellow Master Gardener, Jack Lane, persisted until she agreed. She then met at the Terrace Garden with Venture president, Tom Purcell, and she was hooked.

A year later, The St. Louis Master Gardeners signed an agreement with The Green House Venture, and it has been non-stop ever since. So far this year, the MG team has designed gardens, weeded, planted, mulched, and even created curriculum for the GHV students.

"We've had a great time with all of it," says Holly. "We really appreciate the Venture's attitude of the more partners the better." As examples, the St. Louis Wild Ones awarded a grant for native plants that were used to plant one of the Terrace Garden beds. Also, eighth grade student, Nicholas Zhao, son of Master Gardener, Sherry Ma, researched, designed, and planted an Asian vegetable garden with help from his grandfather for yet another of the Terrace Garden beds. Several other groups have also planted on the Terrace Garden. Harris Stowe State University and Cahoma Orchards/Saint Louis Zoo volunteers contributed by planting African and Native American vegetable gardens.

The Master Gardeners also played a major role in the design and planting of the Entry Gardens at the two corners of the Embankment Greenway. It's been a great partnership that has enabled the organization to use their unique talents in a variety of ways to help bring the Venture's vision to life.



# GROWING FORWARD UPDATE

By: Dan Renolds

Excitement and confidence are building for Growing Forward, the Campaign for the Green House Venture. Campaign leaders and committee members are actively engaging stakeholders and donors to share the great story about the Green House Venture while promoting the inspiring vision of the new green house and education center.

This spring reveals the vibrancy and success of the collaborative terrace gardens initiative on the I44 embankment greenway. And we are eager to see the development and construction of the new facility. The new education center represents an important next step in advancing the GHV's innovative STEM education programming. The new building will be located across the street and will serve as the final phase of the campus plan. Once complete, the GHV will expand its educational impact and extend its reach into other schools in our region and beyond through technology.

The campaign is showcasing the incredible collaborations that make the GHV a uniquely effective organization. We have developed a diversity of partners, from elementary schools to universities; from master gardeners to highway departments. The campaign is presenting opportunities for donors to partner with us, and to help make the vision of the center a reality. If you, or someone you know might be interested giving to the campaign, please contact Tom Purcell, President, at [purcell1@sbcglobal.net](mailto:purcell1@sbcglobal.net). You may also visit our website at [www.greenhousestl.org](http://www.greenhousestl.org).

## GROWING FORWARD

The Campaign for

THE GREEN HOUSE  
VENTURE

IMPROVING SCIENCE  
EDUCATION AND  
CHILDHOOD NUTRITION



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