



Pollinators Have a Pitstop at West Vincent Elementary School

- D. Delany, EAC Chair – November 2022 eNewsletter

As a result of this spring's Earth Day Celebration at West Vincent Elementary School, the Wellness Committee, headed by School Nurse Rebecca Kilfoy (Nurse Becky), expanded their program and added a Pollinator Pitstop and a new student nature club, the WV Nature Club. In late September, volunteers from the West Vincent EAC's Garden Club helped plant the Pollinator Pitstop on the school grounds.



Nurse Becky hopes that active engagement with nature will help students (and faculty) to recover from the stress of the pandemic – kids healing nature * nature healing kids.

Extensive research supports that spending time in nature, specifically in woodland settings, creates profound positive changes in our physical and mental health. Exposure to trees reduces depression, anxiety, and mood disorders, while increasing gratitude, selflessness, and wonder. Trees have been proven to help our cardiovascular and immune systems function better, relieve ADHD, decrease the stress hormone cortisol, and lower blood pressure. Fortunately for our students and teachers, West Vincent Elementary School is surrounded by beautiful woods!

Trees even make us behave better. Communities with neighborhood trees are less violent than communities in similar circumstances but without trees. There is less road rage on streets with trees. Penn State Extension recently hosted a webinar, "Have You Had Your Vitamin Tree?", sharing the latest research on the medical, psychological, and social impacts of trees. The recorded webinar is available on the Penn State website: <https://extension.psu.edu/have-you-had-your-vitamin-tree>.

Not only can the students enjoy the Pollinator Pitstop while they are outside, but they can also experience the garden while inside. The Pitstop was strategically placed near windows of a busy area of the building, where students pass frequently throughout the day, so all can see the flowers, birds, and butterflies. The Pitstop will contain plants that flower in spring and fall to provide seeds and berries for birds in winter. The EAC Garden Club planted garden varieties of purple asters and yellow goldenrods, which are top native Keystone fall plants.

The asters and goldenrods will be added to the Andrew Evans Park Pitstop next spring. This fall, the ground will be prepared for these new plants using the lasagna garden method (using no tools or hard work). This prep method worked so well last year to convert the ground from a grass lawn to a new garden bed with rich, fluffy garden soil. It was so successful that our baby plants thrived while the weeds didn't even try. The lasagna garden method uses layers of materials to kill the grass and weeds and enrich the soil below using cardboard and leaves.



The West Vincent EAC has committed to helping with the new nature programs to be added at West Vincent Elementary School. Please let us know if you would like to volunteer to help (d.delany@comcast.net)! If you would like to add more flowers to your yard the easy way, visit the township website for our next lasagna garden demonstration at Andrew Evans Park as soon as the leaves fall.

