

# Master Gardener Volunteers at Lakeview Elementary School



*Top Photo: Jane Graham and Karen Allenstein pause after working on the Lake View sign.  
Below: MGV Gail Juszczak explains how to plant pumpkin seeds*

Jane Graham is an alum of Lake View Elementary School – and recently, a trained Master Gardener Volunteer. During the 2014 gardening season, she had the chance to use her lifelong love of gardening and her new MGV knowledge to help out her alma mater.

Graham, with five fellow MGVs, coordinated with Lake View's Outdoor Classroom coordinator, Susie Hobart, to help students plant twelve raised beds and a new Kindergarten Pumpkin Patch, clear berry bushes of deep rooted weeds, and plant a butterfly garden. Over the summer, MGVs kept weeds in check, tended the rain garden, and beautified the welcome sign. Graham and fellow Lake View alum Karen Allenstein were especially proud of their work on the sign. "It had thistles...and just wasn't representing all the amazing things going on inside the garden," Graham said. "So we edged, trimmed, weeded, and planted around it. Even the school district's Supervisor of Building and Maintenance complimented the project!"

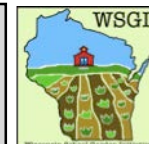
Master Gardener Volunteers were also able to pass on knowledge and resources from their weekly classes at [Dane County UW Extension](#), as well as their own experience as gardeners. The Lake View MGV team even sent in samples of tomato and pumpkin leaves to be analyzed for diseases at the UW lab, and put together a document with recommendations for the school. UW Extension's [Learning Store](#), which MGVs get to know well, is also a great resource.

"Thank you, thank you, and more thanks is the message to all volunteers that help in our school based Outdoor Classroom," said Lake View's Susie Hobart. "Their knowledge and passion helped motivate our students and teachers and teach dozens of bouncy, energetic children the importance of caring for our earth by directing that energy into getting dirty! How much more fun can you get?"

Lake View is one of six schools in Dane County that works with UW Extension to coordinate Master Gardener Volunteer involvement with their school garden. Volunteering with school gardens became a part of the Dane County Master Gardener program in 2011, when Horticulture Educator Lisa Johnson began getting a series of requests from school gardens looking for help. She began pairing MGVs with schools looking for volunteers, and by 2013, MGV trainees were required to spend a portion of their volunteer hours on youth or educational garden projects.

Extensions's Joe Muellenberg, who also works with the Dane County MGV program, had schools create a narrative about the needs of their garden, allowing MGVs to choose volunteer projects that would capture their interest and motivation. "We ended up spending part of one class reading the school garden profiles, and the MGVs gravitated toward tables based on which school would fit them best...it was kind of like speed dating," said Muellenberg. Each MGV team had to designate a primary contact person, responsible for communicating with the school and

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*Top Photo: Raised beds cared for by MGVs over the summer. Below: MGVs Renee Ostrowski & Carol Livingston planting serviceberry bushes*

keeping the entire group “in the loop.” At Lake View, the six volunteers were able to sign up for different work days and individual projects – some that involved students, and some that did not – based on their availability.

Volunteers are often so essential to the long-term success of school gardens, and Master Gardener Volunteers are some of the best. “They really help with some of the challenges school gardens face – whether it’s summer maintenance or year round maintenance, or supporting teachers or after school programs in using the garden,” said Muellenberg. “MGVs can also help if teachers feel overwhelmed at becoming experts about the garden, or using the garden, because the volunteers come out of their class with both knowledge and resources to share.”

While volunteering is a requirement of all Master Gardener programs in Wisconsin, Dane is the only county that requires MGVs to spend a portion of those hours with youth-based garden programs. But it is by no means the only county in which this kind of volunteering happens. In 2013, MGVs across Wisconsin dedicated over 12,000 hours to volunteering with youth and educational gardens – just 449 of these hours came from Dane County. “Individual MGVs are volunteering with school gardens in other counties,” Muellenberg said, “but it’s much more under the radar.”

For schools that are interested in connecting with Master Gardener Volunteers, Muellenberg recommends contacting the Agriculture or Horticulture Educator at their county’s UW Extension office. Schools can also get in touch with their local Master Gardener Association, made up of MGVs who have completed their training and are working to organize garden-based volunteer opportunities.

[See a list of UW Extension offices by county.](#)

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