



#### **BIOGRAPHY AND GARDENING VOLUNTEER HISTORY OF NANCY D. STARK HIGGINS**

Being a resident of Midland for over 45 years and a part of the working community at Dow Corning, Nancy became what she calls herself, "a professional volunteer" for the past 28 years.

Over 15 years ago she volunteered to be on the Appreciation of Beautification Committee and became the co-chairman. In the first year, she authored the first procedures manual for the Committee and volunteered to lead the Appreciation Awards coordinated with the Parks and Recreation Department for the City of Midland. Being in this position also provided the opportunity to volunteer and coordinate the planting of the Centennial Gardens for the Dow Chemical Company's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1998 with the garden clubs in Midland. At that time she was also a member of a garden club and was serving on the Midland Garden Council.



When the next opportunity came with the Midland Area Community Foundation's Entranceways Initiative Task Force, Nancy was asked to serve as a community representative because of her activities with the garden clubs in Midland. This Task Force has been an overwhelming success in beautifying the entranceways into Midland, planting of the Grand Curve, and particularly the Midland signage on all our streets, byways and entrances. She served on the committee that chose the medallion designs at the Eastman Ave overpass and helped choose the logo and design of the medallions to present to the committee. She continues to serve on this committee as a community advisor.

To enhance her knowledge of horticulture, she has earned her Advanced Master Gardener certification and has volunteered over 3,500 hours in the Midland Community. In addition she has served as an officer and instructor for the Association. Midland Blooms has been another activity and she rarely misses planting along Eastman Ave in May. She is a member of this committee going on 9 years and has led the instruction for the block captains before we had a city horticulturist.

In 2006, as the District Director for Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc. she was instrumental in helping to establish a new club, Great Lakes Gardeners, in Midland. After four years as a director for this state organization and 2 years as 1<sup>st</sup> vice president, on June 11, 2011, Nancy was installed as the State President for MGC, Inc. and is Michigan's representative on the 7 state Central Region Board of Directors and the National Garden Clubs, Inc. Board of Directors 2011-2013.

Being a member of the American Horticulture Society for many years, she was surprised on October, 2012 when she opened their monthly web site newsletter and found that the picture she submitted of the Autumn Clematis growing in her garden was their picture of the month.

Accepting the MGC, Inc. President's position requires her to focus on certain projects of her two year term of office. Nancy's project is "Growing Gardens – Building Communities". General guidelines were written for the 185 clubs across the state trying to encourage all gardeners to share their crops and plant a row in their public gardens to give to shelters and homeless kitchens. A "Harvest Gathering" of products for local use and to help the Food Bank Network at their locations was held during her term at every district and State meeting. The donations were given to local food banks.

## **GROWING GARDENS – CREATING COMMUNITIES**

### **2011-2013 THEME OF THE PRESIDENCY**

### **NANCY D. STARK HIGGINS INSTALLATION SPEECH**

The adventure of a new administration begins tomorrow and for the next two years, I will serve you as president. It is with great pride that I am a part of this organization. But it isn't a job that one can do all alone. Each one of the elected officers, committee chairmen, advisory committee members, and club members serve as an integral spoke in the wheel of progress that makes Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc. what it is today and where it is headed in the future. We all contribute in our communities in a variety of ways.

I've been a garden club member since 1990. It has reinforced my belief that gardeners do the best work in town, they know how to get the job done, and really don't expect that much recognition for their projects. They enjoy their accomplishments and relish the beauty they provide for their communities.

As you know, each state president has special projects they promote during their two years in office, So let me begin with what I would like to see happen in 2011-2013.



## **Loda Lake Wildflower Sanctuary in the Manistee National Forest and within the National Forest Service.**

We will continue supporting this precious project through the sale of our "spirit wear" line of items that Lynn Dinvald began two years ago. When my garden club took a bus trip to Loda Lake in May, we were met by 4 docents and we walked the trails. It was a cloudy and rainy day. We were lucky it didn't rain while we were on the walk or we would have been wet for sure. So for all of you that have been to Loda Lake, you can see they need the pavilion for shelter and with our help I hope we will see this happen.

### **Community Gardens.**

Obviously with the name of the convention you have guessed that another one of my projects will be promoting clubs to continue their work in current areas but we are also going to help you enhance your existing gardens.

Many of you have already planted your gardens and planters. But could you fit in some herb plants or vegetable plants with your flowers? Perhaps you could take one of your former flower gardens and grow vegetables for a nearby shelter or organization that would distribute fresh produce to kitchens.

Contact the church, a local library or public facilities in your communities and begin a vegetable garden. The River Valley Garden Club in District III has established a wonderful community garden. However, there was a lot of work and planning that went along with this. It isn't an easy task to partner with the city, town, and community leaders but I know you will be successful. I will present all clubs with a guideline on "How to begin and sustain a community Garden in your town.

### **My third project is "Harvest Gathering"**

This Fall we will begin the "Harvest Gathering" at our district, State and president's meetings. Through the district directors and their call letters to meetings, I want to encourage each attendee to bring a non-perishable donation to the district meeting. This collection of items is to be given to the local food pantry network where the district and State meetings are held. A local Harvest Gathering chairman or a representative from the Network will be scheduled to come and pick up the "harvest" of canned goods, personal care products, and paper products and be given to needy families during the winter months.

If your club has been waiting for a new challenge, this is it! Feed those who are less fortunate than we are. Grow it – share it – give it to your local pantry network, homeless shelter or soup kitchen.

### **MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT EFFORT**

#### **For all the floral arrangers and designers or other gardeners who have an abundance of flowers in their gardens –**

Do you have a business, post office, city building, or church that would welcome a fresh flower arrangement once a week? If you put a small business card or flyer beside your arrangement, you may find a new member wanting to join your club and learn how to arrange flowers. Flowers on the church alter once a month with a note in the church bulletin will catch the eye of that budding arranger. Pick a public spot to show your garden flowers in all their glory and see how it works as a member recruitment tool.

### **And my last effort but not least will be for the environmental awareness.**

I've covered community gardening, gardening study, floral design, landscaping with vegetables. Michigan is surrounded by the fresh water of the Great Lakes. Shirley Nicolai has topped her list of projects with the conservation and preservation of our most precious resource, fresh water and our ecosystem. I've given Karen Jencks, our Environmental Study Chairman information that you will read about in upcoming issues of the Gate. We all need to be aware of the problems facing our generation and the next with keeping fresh water available.

In the morning at my first board of directors meeting, there is another item on my agenda. Each of my board members will be receiving a ceramic cup in a bag. Why you might ask? Well to save us all from using plastic and Styrofoam cups that fill our landfills and don't disintegrate. What does your club use? Please think about having your members bring their own containers for drinks. These bags will hold recyclable and returnable bottles also. Let's get started and enjoy the adventure of Growing Gardens – Creating Communities.

Nancy Stark, President 2011-2013

**MICHIGAN GARDEN CLUBS, INC.**  
**MEMBER OF NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS, INC.**  
**MAY 30, 2013 ANNUAL REPORT**  
**NANCY D. STARK HIGGINS, PRESIDENT**

Board Members, Delegates, and member:

This report will cover the two year term of my presidency in brief. Projects that were started are now complete and I want to review our accomplishments.

**MEMBERSHIP:**

Our membership is dropping and at the present time we have 178 clubs with 6,650+ members. Our members are aging and we need to find new ways to attract the younger members through projects that will entice them to form youth garden clubs and join existing clubs. Membership growth is critical to our survival as an organization and it is up to each individual member to recruit and replace themselves for the future.

**BLUE STAR MEMORIAL MARKERS**

During the past two years there have been 16 Blue Star dedications around the State. Two weeks ago we placed a marker in the Great Lakes National Cemetery in Holly. This is the second marker in a national cemetery. Several other clubs have scheduled or are planning more this coming year. The new Blue Star lapel pin has been widely accepted and worn with pride.

**SCHOLARSHIPS TO STUDENTS**

The scholarship program gave \$27,000 to university students through our MGC accounts. In addition, other clubs give scholarships for various other student activities around the State. The State account for scholarships is significantly down and we need to promote this project to continue our commitment to students. Funds provided by investments are not providing us with the necessary dollars to continue the scholarships at the level given in past years.

**SPIRIT WEAR AND MARKETPLACE**

The proceeds from the spirit wear inventory and marketplace was used to help fund the Loda Lake Project. This spring, however, the marketplace and convention proceeds will be given to the scholarship fund. The marketplace and spirit wear sales at district meetings will conclude with this administration. Other plans are being made for the future.

**HARVEST GATHERING PRESIDENT'S PROJECT**

This project provided non-perishable food, paper, and personal care products to food pantries in our communities around Michigan. It was very successful and some clubs continue to bring items to monthly meetings to donate. Thank you to all of you for caring and helping feed the hungry.



### **COMMUNITY GARDENING PRESIDENT'S PROJECT**

This convention will feature three projects on community gardens and awards will be presented along with checks to help fund this year's plants and seeds. There are poster displays for you to gather ideas for your own club in another area. Last year, seed packets were handed out for this project. Teaching others how to grow vegetables and harvest is growing across the U.S. and you should be proud of your contributions to the community garden project.

### **LEADERSHIP SEMINARS**

Leadership workshops were created and presented with the leadership of Deannie Picciotti and other board members. Two districts participated with very good attendance. This project will continue in the next administration and watch for a workshop coming near you.

### **EDUCATIONAL SCHOOLS**

It has been a very successful two years for all four of the schools. All have been in session with Landscape Design and Flower Show School ending this spring. Gardening Study is half way through and Environmental School began last month. Already there are two districts initiating the next Landscape Design and Flower Show School for this next year. All schools are funded independently and attendance is outstanding. We have a great list of qualified speakers to choose from around the State. Flower Show Symposiums are highly successful in early summer and well attended.

### **LODA LAKE WILDFLOWER SANCTUARY**

The Loda Lake Project is now in its fourth year of the campaign to fund a teaching pavilion. We have raised the funds and exceeded the amount necessary. Lynn Dinvald had the vision and I carried it forward during my term. Now we have sent the first installment to get the project underway. The National Forest Service is our partner and will begin improving the roadway into the sanctuary and also create a better parking area for visitors. A new NFS bathroom facility will be installed this summer along with the pavilion. There is a maintenance fund also established for the future upkeep. The Board and several board members provided the needed \$10,000 base to establish a fund for memorial contributions. Limited funds will be matched for memorials.

In addition to our own pavilion project, MGC partnered with the NFS and asked for a large grant to improve the roadway. It was granted by the Fremont Area Community Foundation and is in place to begin this spring.

Now it is time for the 2011-2013 term to end. Together we have accomplished many things. As your President I have been honored to serve you. Because you care about your communities and the projects of National and State Garden Clubs, you all need a pat on the back award. I hope to pat many of you and say a special thank you for all your accomplishments. You are very deserving of the recognition through awards you receive. Keep those projects going and please ask a friend to come to your next club meeting.

### **MICHIGAN GARDEN CLUBS, INC.**

### **MEMBER OF NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS, INC.**

### **MICHIGAN ANNUAL REPORT GIVEN AT THE NATIONAL CONVENTION MAY, 2013**



Madame President, National Board Members and Guests:

Michigan Garden Clubs partnership with the National Forest Service at the Loda Lake Wildflower Sanctuary in the Huron-Manistee National Forest near Baldwin, MI. is moving forward since we reached our goal of \$23,000 for a teaching pavilion on the site. In addition, Michigan Garden Clubs worked with the Baldwin Forest Service personnel and prepared and received a grant for \$90,000 of the \$183,600 request toward the infrastructure improvement project at Loda Lake. Consequently, a new roadway and parking lot is now under construction. In addition, a federally regulated handicapped bathroom facility will also be constructed in along with the pavilion. Both structure designs are in accordance with those in other NFS parks.

To maintain the wildflower sanctuary, Michigan Board Members donated \$10,000 for an endowment fund with a local community foundation for long-term maintenance. Memorial gifts to this fund will be matched dollar for dollar by the foundation up to \$500/per memorial donation.

Karen Motawi, the Chair of this project has been recognized by National Garden Clubs as a Member of Honor for her dedication. In addition, Karen produced a video of the sanctuary and it can be found on You Tube under Loda Lake Wildflower Sanctuary. The 72 acre site has been a favorite project since the 1930's for Michigan Garden Clubs and we are very proud of our partnership with the National Forest Service.

Nancy Stark, President 2011-2013  
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