

Gateway Services, Inc.

Program Area:

Natural Areas Program

County:

Bureau

Grant Date:

April 2016

Grant Amount:

11000

Location:

Princeton, IL 61536

Gateway Services Inc. partnered with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to plant pollinator habitat at its property, which sits at one of the major entrances to the town of Princeton, IL.

Gateway, a non-profit organization providing services to adults and children with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, was actively seeking new ways to connect with the community. Gateway viewed the pollinator habitat project as an opportunity to bring the community together in a way that would be rewarding for Gateway clients and add to the quality of life in Princeton.

With the help of volunteers 2,500 square feet of habitat were installed at the site as well as a "Little Library" that specializes in books on pollinator species. The hive-shaped Little Library also contains popular children's and adult books to help attract additional foot traffic into the habitat.

During the grant period, a total of more than 225 visitors attended three events at the habitat including a community planting day, an Earth Day celebration, and a Pollinator Celebration and market day. Gateway hung two large outdoor banners and put up additional signage in the street to promote the garden before and after these activities.

What's next for this project? The intent of this project was and continues to be a demonstration of how to involve various members of a small rural community in learning about science, horticulture, ecology, and related topics, especially as they pertain to pollinators and the interdependent nature of animals and plants.

By providing opportunities for K-12 students and teachers, people with disabilities, gardeners and diverse community volunteers to learn through hands-on experience, the approach has generated new interest and commitment to preserving and restoring habitats for Monarch butterflies, bees and other pollinators.

Currently, new volunteers are being trained to help coordinate school year field trips to the habitat and to present the garden and pollinators to other groups such as the 4h Club and the Girl & Boy Scouts.