

Seeds For Life

This is a story of one's love for one's neighbor during this new millennium. In March of 2003 while watching news of the war in Iraq, Margarett Jones, (at the time) President Elect of Houston Federation of Garden Clubs remembered the stories of poverty in Iraq related to her by a native Iraqi. Like many of us watching the events, her heart went out to the people whose lives had been so suppressed by a dictator leaving their rich country in desolation. But unlike many of us Margarett had a dream. She recalled the Chinese proverb, "*Give a person a fish, feed him for a day: teach him to fish, feed him for a lifetime.*" After several months it became evident that the situation in Iraq was too unstable for this outreach. Margarett enlisted me (Ann Nette Pearce) to help her develop a program.

I was soon introduced to the Texas Garden Club Inc. past World Gardening Chairman, Idalia Aguilar at the Texas Design Seminar in College Station. We discussed the idea of collecting seeds from our members to send to impoverished communities. Idalia, who had moved from Guatemala, introduced us to an organization named Sending Out Servants (SOS). This Houston group visits a highland section in Quiche, Guatemala, four times a year. They have experience working with the native Mayans on agricultural conservation programs.

They were delighted to receive the seeds and utilized them in projects for an old age home, boys school, and improving the food supply in rural Mayan communities. This was the start of what has become today an international program.

Idalia who is liaison of the new National Garden Club Inc. President to the International Affiliates is in direct contact with this dynamic group. This provides) an opportunity to contact the many Garden Clubs in Mexico, the Caribbean, South and Central America and we have worked closely with the International Affiliates Representatives.

Several of our donations are monetary for the purchase of seeds due to international regulations that prohibit the importation of seeds.

Seeds for Life is a joint program of Texas Garden Clubs Inc. and the Houston Federation of Garden Clubs.

The Houston Federation of Garden Clubs (HFGC) is the main communication in the garden club community of the greater Houston area. HFGC enthusiastically adopted this program. It is this organization's first World Gardening program in many years.

Seeds of Life Objectives:

- Provide seed to the needy.
- Share knowledge of how to plant, cultivate, and harvest seeds.
- Teach methods to improve soils using good environmental and conservation principles.
- Foster the "Seeds For Life" Texas Garden Club Inc. World Gardening program.

At the Texas Garden Club Inc. 2004 Fall Convention, Idalia Aguilar enthusiastically proposed the introduction of the project to TGC, Inc. With the support of Linda Whetsell, at the time TGC Inc. State President, the "Seeds For Life" project was approved.

The seeds kept coming in from our wonderful garden club members. November of 2004 we had sent seeds or donations to Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, and Peru. An application for a World Gardening Award was submitted to National Garden Clubs Inc. HFGC was so excited to receive the Dean World Gardening Award at the National Garden Club convention.

During Carol Russell's presidency of Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. an added expansion was introduced with the co-operation of other professional organizations.

With the Botanical Research Institute of Texas, seeds were provided for a major horticultural project in Peru, South America.

Working with the Texas A & M Borlaug Institute Food for the Americas program, A&M Garden Club designed a Visual Design booklet teaching native women to design and sell tropical arrangements. More importantly monetary donations provided for sustainable, ecological gardens for food to improve the community's nutrition. <http://borglaug.tamu.edu>

Carol Russell, who has now become Advisor of the project also encouraged the Woodland Garden Club of Dallas to collect and distribute the seeds that come in to Texas Garden Club Inc. headquarters.

At the Spring TGC, Inc. convention, as Judy Keillor was installed as its President; our original dream of sending seeds to Iraq was beginning to take shape and become a reality. During President Keillor's administration SFL was formally adopted as a Program by Texas Garden Clubs Inc.

Woodlands Garden Club of Dallas recently fulfilled their dream of helping the Batwa pygmies.

Monetary and seed donations will aid these hunters and gather natives adjust to a farming life style. The program will take place under the supervision of the Kellermann Foundation.

Woodlands Garden Club is also sending seeds to beautify several dusty Honduran villages providing a variety of vegetables. http://www.kellermannfoundation.org/about_us.htm

<http://www.pygmies.net>

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Seeds For Life has expanded thanks to Texas Garden Clubs Inc. in 2008 it approved the recommendation to donate seeds to local humanitarian organizations in the USA. Due to international regulations regarding importation of horticultural products, it was difficult to transport the seeds in many foreign countries. In the Spring seeds were donated to Urban Harvest for various community and school gardening programs. At the beginning of this school year, your seeds donations are being incorporated in HISD programs. Others have been used in Westbury Community Gardens, Kolter Elementary Garden Club. www.urbanharvest.org

Sending seeds internationally was limited by the import restrictions of many countries. Thanks again to Texas Garden Clubs Inc. who in 2008 approved our use of the seeds in our local communities with approved programs. In the District IV area we are donating seeds to Urban Harvest. Seeds are furnished for school and community garden programs. The main donation was to HISD schools for youth gardening. www.urbanharvest.org

Other organizations were the Westbury Community Garden, Kohler Elementary garden club.

One of the most heartwarming donations was given to Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center. Guyneth encouraged the organization of developing a garden therapy program at our great

Houston center for our veterans. It is so rewarding for your donations to be used to help our veterans rehabilitate.

The two of the International Affiliate Garden Clubs are requesting monetary donations for the destruction of their sponsored gardens in Monterrey Mexico due to Hurricane Agatha. Other affiliate garden clubs are our primary concern. Seeds were sent to College Grimm in Sante Fe, Guajimapa Mexico for the school of under privileged students.

Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT) is also in need of our continued support. Our sister club, Woodlands Garden Club of Dallas manages the seeds sent to Texas Garden Clubs Inc. www.brit.org

One of the serendipitous results of this World Gardening program is the close association with other Garden Clubs. It started in our metropolitan Houston area, then our large number of Texas garden clubs and internationally with the Affiliate Garden Clubs

Thank you, Thank you

Texas Garden Club, Inc

Which means all of you great members!!!