



Contact:

Lynda Bell
Keep Nassau Beautiful
904-261-0165
knb@keepnassaubeautiful.org

Planting Nassau's Future Media Release

For Immediate Release



Planting Nassau's Future with Fernandina Beach Middle School

Three-hundred Florida-friendly flowering plants and three Live Oak trees planted at Fernandina Beach Middle School.

Fernandina Beach, Florida, May 28, 2021. – In celebration of Earth Day, Keep Nassau Beautiful (KNB) partnered with Fernandina Beach Middle School (FBMS) to plant 300 Florida-friendly flowering plants. The project required support from many sponsors including school custodians and maintenance for installation of irrigation, KNB volunteers to construct five 4'x8' raised beds, Lowe's to help source supplies, Liberty Landscape Supply to sponsor and deliver 34 yards of soil, Dune Science Group to assist with sourcing the plants, Fernandina Beach Parks and Rec to maintain the plants until the beds were ready for planting, and volunteers from the Florida Native Plant Society, IXIA Chapter to provide the plant recommendation and youth education.

Assistant Principal Kathryn Benson was the school champion for the project. Students quickly became enthusiastic for the project and as a result the FBMS Garden Group was formed to participate in the planting and maintenance of the beds. School educator Katie Haynes volunteered to lead the Garden Group and manage the watering schedule. The beds are planted with 7 species of Florida-friendly flowering plants. The milkweed quickly provided an educational opportunity for the students. Monarch Butterfly eggs, larva, and caterpillars were visible from day one. Very shortly caterpillars were observed transitioning to chrysalis, and within a few weeks the first Monarch Butterfly emerged to repeat the cycle.

Momentum has continued to build for the project and the Garden Group. KNB recently held an educational event to answer questions from the Garden Group regarding the lifecycle of a Monarch butterfly, and other insects observed in the raised beds. Additionally, with contributions to its Legacy Tree program from Amelia Island Foundation and an anonymous donor, KNB provided three 30-gallon Live Oak trees which were supplied by Liberty Landscape Supply. The live oak trees were planted along a common area walk-way and will provide shade and benefits for many years to come!

"Fernandina Beach Middle School deeply appreciates the support *Keep Nassau Beautiful* has poured into our school," said Kathryn Benson, Assistant principal. "As a result of Executive Director Lynda Bell's leadership and the generosity of *Keep Nassau Beautiful* and its partners, our students are now immersed in a living lab that allows them to observe the scientific processes taking place all around them, as they participate in hands-on learning opportunities; their excitement for this endeavor is contagious, and our Garden Club has swiftly grown to become the largest club on campus with nearly 1 of every 9 students involved in taking care of and nurturing these plants and the animal lives they sustain. We are so very grateful for how our community has rallied around us in providing our students this incredible opportunity."

"We appreciate the support of Fernandina Beach City Commissioners and the Florida Department of Transportation, whose grant programs made this educational project possible," said Lynda Bell, Executive Director KNB. "Together with these sponsors and educators we are building a curiosity for the love of nature in the minds of our Nassau County youth."

For information and to get involved in Planting Nassau's Future: www.KeepNassauBeautiful.org or 261-0165.



FBMS Garden Group participate in Planting Nassau's Future. Sandy Mellin, FBMS, Chadd Scott and Betsy Harris, KNB.



FBMS Garden Group, with Keep Nassau Beautiful, and newly installed Florida-friendly pollinator gardens.



Amelia Island Foundation donation to Keep Nassau Beautiful for Planting Nassau's Future and the benefit of Fernandina Beach Middle School. Pictured left to right, FBMS educators Katie Haynes and Sandy Mellin, Amelia Island Foundation's Maurie Dugger, KNB Lynda Bell and Chadd Scott, Principal Edward Brown, Assistant Principal Kathryn Benson, and KNB Betsy Harris.

About Keep Nassau Beautiful

Keep Nassau Beautiful, Inc. is working to inspire, educate, and equip individuals, groups, businesses, and governments to take action to make Nassau County a place where residents, visitors and wildlife can thrive and experience the beauty of Nassau County. www.keepnassaubeautiful.org

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