

## **KENT GARDEN CLUB SOUTHWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROJECT**

**Kent Garden Club's** involvement with **Southwood Elementary school** began with member Jean Kruger introducing the Woodsy Owl program. The staff, principal and students were such a joy to work with that we thought another project at the school would be not only beneficial and educational for the students, but fun for all. The school, an impressive structure, is located on protected property.

Southwood Elementary is a reward school, whose students outperform on the state standardized tests, as compared with students of similar economic and demographic levels.

The first year KGC began planning the garden, most of the time was spent getting to know the teachers and students.

The second year we renovated the raised beds, enriched the soil, planted seeds, watered plants, created a pollinator garden, and taught the students about the Square Foot Gardening method to help increase their yields. Because of our work, and the students' enthusiastic participation, parents began to come after work to help with the garden. A new idea was born to add gardening plots for parents and grandparents. We learned that one of the most frustrating experiences schools face is trying to encourage parents to attend conferences and feel comfortable interacting with teachers and staff. Our garden encouraged interaction and helped to develop relationships.

KGC members raised funds, recruited some husbands and set to work with a design for a measured increase of gardening space, stabilizing the fencing and adding a beautiful wooden gate. A plan to rid the stubborn grass and weeds, by laying cardboard covered by wood chips, was our summer project. Currently, we are researching a design and method to install a sprinkling system. This would create a more effective usage of water. This is KGC's third growing season with the school and continues to expand with enthusiasm.

Kindergarten teacher, Julie VanLier, came to our September board meeting and presented us with the pictured sign of appreciation for our

dedication of the garden. It will be mounted on the fencing at the entrance to the school garden.



Husbands join in

Sign of Appreciation