

September 2022

CENTRAL
GARDENS
NORTH IOWA

What's Growing On!

at Central Gardens of North Iowa

*By all these lovely tokens
September days are here,
With summer's best of weather
And autumn's best of cheer.
-Helen Hunt Jackson*



Thank you, JCI Iowa!



Members of the JCI Iowa 2022 Fall All-State conference, which includes the Clear Lake Jaycees, were in the Gardens on August 20 to lay limestone edging and mulch. About 20 conference members worked with Central Gardens' volunteers to place limestone blocks all along the edge of the little libraries, extending to the Bee Happy Discovery Garden. The edging better defines the area, which includes the Medicine Wheel Garden in addition to the libraries. They also laid fresh mulch on a barren path. Their efforts made the space even more beautiful. Thank you, Jaycees!

PRESERVATION CELEBRATION & MORE!

Learn, taste, and share at this year's Preservation Celebration on Sunday, September 11, from 2 PM to 4 PM. Come share your thoughts and visit with others about what you feel is important to preserve. A variety of participants will share ideas and demonstrate how nature, food, and culture can be preserved. The event is free and open to the public.

Starting at 5 PM, Central Gardens will host a farm-to-table harvest dinner. This is a ticketed event that features a beautiful six-course meal prepared with locally sourced food and signature beverage. Dining will take place amidst the fall glory of the Garden but will move into the Pavilion in case of inclement weather. Seating is limited. Tickets for the dinner are just \$75 and selling fast. Order your tickets on our website at www.centralgardensnorthiowa.com, via email at info@centralgardensnorthiowa.com, or at 641-357-0700.



CENTRAL GARDENS: *A Garden Oasis*

The following is part 1 of an article written by Lori Berglund, a free-lance writer with Big Green Umbrella Media, for Clear Lake Living, published in 2012. Part 2 will be presented in the October newsletter.



The news would have spread quickly around the lake. There was no need for a Twitter feed: this news spread like wildfire.

It was devastating news, indeed, for a community that must have worked so hard to build a school so beautiful. Central School was no doubt the pride of Clear Lake when it burned in 1912, exactly one century ago this year.

For a community that was still so young, it's hard to fathom today the extent of the loss felt by the people of this town when this daunting school with its Romanesque arches was devastated by fire.

But all was not lost: the community came together and built a new Central School that would serve the students of this lake town for most of the new century.

Let your mind wander back in time for a few minutes and consider all that happened in those hallowed walls of the new Central School. There are stories to tell here.

The school was new when the "Doughboys" marched off "Over There" in World War I. The boys and girls, young women and young men, who knew this school best were here when the stock market crashed. They were her when FDR spoke to the nation on the day after Pearl Harbor. They were here when news spread that a young president had been shot while riding in a motorcade in Dallas.

The stories are endless. But the school is gone, its labor done, still the stories continue in this special place. Today, this full city block on the corner of North Eighth Street and Second Avenue North is home to Central Gardens of North Iowa, named in memory of the school that stood here so long. Central Gardens, like the old Central School, is a bit incongruous, in that it is both busy, and yet quite serene; it is historic, and yet it is firmly planted in the future. And it's also just a whole lot of fun.

"I enjoy the peacefulness," says Kim Moran of Clear Lake. *"It's just a nice place to come and relax. It's beautiful here."* Moran is one of the many volunteers who make this privately-funded garden a glorious place for the public to visit. During a recent Fresh on Fridays celebration at the Gardens, Moran had found a quiet table to sit and work, creating flowers for the top of a wedding cake.

"I'm involved with doing the food for Central Gardens, so I thought while I was doing that I could also sit here and make flowers. It's a beautiful place to sit and work," she explains.

The wedding was to be the following day in another location, and, while Moran sat and rolled the sugared flowers, she had time to chat with friends gathered around her table. Joining her was Linda Sorenson, another volunteer at the Gardens. She assists with planning the art feature on the second Friday of each month, as well as the Recycle, Repurpose and Reuse feature on the fifth Friday of the month.

On this particular Friday, Paul Weitzel of Mason City was singing and playing the guitar as guests sipped lavender lemonade (with lavender fresh from Moran's garden) and munched on chocolate-dipped strawberries. On other Fridays, guests will find artists bringing canvases to life or demonstrating the art of making dried flowers. Even knitting groups have been known to come and share their artistry as the needles fly.

Recycle, Repurpose and Reuse, held when there is a fifth Friday in the month, is particularly fun, as Sorenson shows how to turn ordinary junk into outdoor art pieces. (Hint: Colorful old bowling balls make great reflecting balls on

farms where the open wind is notorious for sending ordinary balls into the next county.)

"In my own gardens, I have a lot of repurposed items, like an old wagon, a sewing machine and just a lot of things," Sorenson says. *"I'm a farm girl so I have a lot of old containers, feed buckets and things like that."*

Fresh on Fridays is one of several special events held regularly (8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Fridays) throughout the summer at Central Gardens. But it really doesn't take a special event to make it a special day at the Gardens. Mary Paquette-Abt of Detroit was in town recently to visit with her mom, Joyce Paquette, and found herself absolutely delighted to share a mother/daughter stroll through the Gardens.

"This is quite a surprise," says Paquette-Abt. *"It's absolutely lovely."*

While her mother, Joyce, spends summers in Clear Lake, she hadn't been to the Gardens for at least a year or more and was impressed with how the place continues to grow and mature. Both mother and daughter agree that to fully experience the Gardens, one has to take the time to get inside them.

"It doesn't reveal itself from the street," says Paquette-Abt.

Indeed, Central Gardens is actually a series of "secret gardens," that have been described as "pearls on a string," one gem after another creating a jeweled piece that is greater than the sum of its parts.

"At first when you come here, you think it's just a beautiful garden, but then you learn the story that there are 22 gardens, and there's sort of a pattern throughout the garden from earlier times, to native American times, to Victorian times, and so forth. It's just a cool story to learn," says Alex Klus, a Mason City native who has been volunteering at Central Gardens as an Iowa State intern this summer.

The Landscape Architecture major is impressed with how Central Gardens was planned and designed. She sees a garden – any garden – as a place that can tell a story or not, depending on the experience of the person viewing the garden.

"It's really whatever the person walking through the garden wants to learn," she says. *"It's up to the viewer, I think. You can design with intent, or you can simply create an experience designed for relaxation."*

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UPCOMING EVENTS AT CENTRAL GARDENS

There's still lots of things happening at Central Gardens this fall!

Follow us on Facebook or visit our website for details about these events and other activities at Central Gardens.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 5:30 PM - 7 PM *Pop-up Italian Cooking Class (Free)*

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 9 AM - 11 AM *Fresh on Friday Bouquet Sales*

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 5 PM - 6 PM *Picnics & Performances - Matt Woods (Free)*

TUESDAYS, SEPTEMBER 6, 13, 20, & 27, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM *Line Dancing with Mary Jo (Free)*

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2 PM - 4 PM *Preservation Celebration (Free)*

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 5 PM - 7 PM *Farm-to-Table Harvest Dinner (Ticketed event)*

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 10 AM - 11:30 AM *Senior Social (Free)*

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 3 PM *Bell ringing in Central Gardens for Constitution Day (Free)*

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2 PM - 5 PM *Garden Fiesta (Free)*

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, 4 PM - 7 PM *Pumpkin Palooza (Free)*

