

School Yard Habitat Improvement Grant Application

Date: October 30, 2014

School Name: Village School of North Bennington (formerly North Bennington Graded School).

Persons submitting proposal: Lois Davis, VSNB Four Winds Coordinator and Judie Brower, Four Winds Volunteer, Assistant coordinator. (Contact info below is for Judie Brower.)

School Principal: Tom Martin, Head of School

This grant proposal for the Four Winds Mini-Grant program, submitted on behalf of the Village School of North Bennington (VSNB- formerly North Bennington Graded School) - g, is for the construction of a Bird and Butterfly-Attracting Garden to be housed on the grounds of the neighboring Hiland Hall Gardens. VSNB uses the grounds of the Hiland Hall Gardens for numerous educational programs. As an example, this Fall's cooperative program was covered today on the front page of the Bennington Banner. Thank you in advance for considering this proposal.

Project: Design and Create a Bird and Butterfly-Attracting Garden

This grant proposal is for the creation of a butterfly and bird-attracting garden on behalf of the Village School of North Bennington.

The Village School has been involved with the Four Winds Nature Program for over 20 years. During that time, because of the limited amount of "wild space" in our school grounds, our students have used a number of local areas for their Four Winds exploration and learning programs. Up until recently, these included the neighboring historic Park McCullough House grounds and the Mile Around Woods.

Over the past 2 years, the Village School has also had the opportunity to use the newly created non-profit Hiland Hall Garden classrooms including an outdoor "living classroom", a restored Grapery, and a small building for indoor projects during inclement weather. With the help of community and school volunteers, donations from Harris Seeds and Clearbrook Farms, and grants from the Fund for North Bennington, students have grown their own vegetables, planted pumpkins, studied pond life, made grape juice from grapes growing in the Victorian-era restored grapery, built garden sculptures, written poetry inspired by the gardens, created handmade paper embedding seeds from the garden, enjoyed a home-grown tea party and much more. The students' use of the grounds has expanded to the point where in the 2014/2015 school year, under the direction the HHG's educational director, Kristen Blaker, students from every grade (Preschool through Sixth) come for twelve weeks of garden classes. Students take advantage of not only the proximity of the gardens, but the abundant space available for expanding their learning environment to the natural world and growing connections to the lessons taught in the classroom.

With it's close proximity to the school (about a five minute walk) and the valuable outdoor classroom setup with a chalkboard and picnic table, the Hiland Hall Gardens has also become the perfect environment for VSNB students participating in the Four Winds Nature Program. Only a month or so into this year's program, our Four Winds volunteers and students have already used the grounds as part of this year's Ecosystems program, including the "Signs of Leaf-Eaters" and "Snags and Rotting Logs" sessions. They were able to discover and examine a wide range of leaf-eaters and their resulting damage in a variety of trees, shrubs, pond plants and vegetables; rotting logs near the pond and old snags at the back end of the garden were ideal for exploration as well. Last winter the grounds were the ideal location for our Animal Tracking and Identification lesson.

The Hiland Hall Garden is also within an easy walking distance from most of the VSNB families. As a result, students share what they've learned with their friends and families and visit the garden even during the summer months or when school's not in session.

Goals for this Project:

Although the Hiland Hall Garden has extensive perennial beds, few of the plants are ideal for attracting birds and butterflies and there are currently only a few birdhouses on the grounds. The Garden has generously offered the Village School/Four Winds program the use of a 20 X 40 foot sunny plot of land in which to create a bird and butterfly garden. The location is great but the area is adjacent to a restored grapery and the soil is gravelly and will need to be amended. With the neighboring meadows and small pond, creating a butterfly garden in this area would provide space for multiple microenvironments in which to attract many of the caterpillars and butterflies native to southern Vermont. We will also be able to install birdhouses within and on the outskirts of the garden, including a row of Blue Bird houses.

With the ongoing loss of natural habitats and increased chemical use in gardens and farmlands, areas like the Hiland Hall Gardens are key to providing safe havens for birds and butterflies to thrive and breed. Both birds and butterflies play an important environmental role by pollinating flowers, helping control pests and scattering seeds. Creating a green space specifically designed to attract birds and butterflies will also aid in biodiversity and strengthen the food chain.

As part of this project, students will work with Four Winds and HHG volunteers to research and develop a list of the best native bird and butterfly-attracting plants for our area including annuals, perennials and shrubs. Although some perennials may be donated by community members and local garden centers, we will need to purchase additional seeds and plants to assure a long season of butterfly and bird-attracting blooms and seed heads.

Students will be involved in every step of the growing process - from preparing the beds, planning and laying out the gardens, planting the seeds and plants, caring for the garden, and recording the types of caterpillars, butterflies and birds attracted to the garden.

With the help of several community volunteers, including a talented carpenter who is a long-time supporter of our Four Winds Program, students will build and hang birdhouses within the Hiland Hall Garden and adjacent Mile Around Woods and Meadow.

Learning Opportunities Created with the Addition of the Bird/Butterfly Garden:

Creating a bird and butterfly-attracting garden gives the students a chance to do a considerable amount of "hands on" learning.

During their research to develop the plant list, students will learn about native plants and what types of plants attract specific birds and butterflies. They'll also learn:

- which butterflies they can realistically attract and discover what their larvae feed on
- which butterflies and birds are native to our area and the importance they play in our ecosystem
- what specific needs birds and butterflies have within their habitats (food, shelter, water, protection from wind and predators, the importance of sun, etc.)
- the 4 stages of the butterfly's life cycle and how to identify them in their various stages
- the feeding and nesting habits of birds and butterflies
- what plants currently in the gardens and surrounding meadows and woods may also be attractive to birds and butterflies and why

As we create the garden, the students will draw a map of the various plants and their locations and keep observational journals documenting which plants attracted which birds and butterflies. Students will work together with community volunteers learning valuable skills building the birdhouses. They

will also learn about the types of houses various birds prefer along with nesting and breeding habits. Many of the students will be able to apply the knowledge gained during last year's Four Wind's program, *Patterns in Nature*, as they work on this project.

Community Involvement:

The Village of North Bennington is a small but vibrant community filled with parents, teachers, retirees, college students and others who enjoy working with children. Not only has the VSNB been active in the Four Winds program but has also been involved in a variety of nature programs, all of which include community volunteer participation. Some examples are: participating in Seed to Plate curriculum at HHG, taking advantage of the One World Conservation Center's programs, and attending a 3-day Keewaydin Educational Environmental Camp at Lake Dunmore.

The Four Winds Volunteers, along with several other community volunteers, are prepared to assist the VSNB students with the creation of a Bird and Butterfly-Attracting garden. Although the garden will be open to all, students taking the most active role will be those in grades 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Itemized Budget:

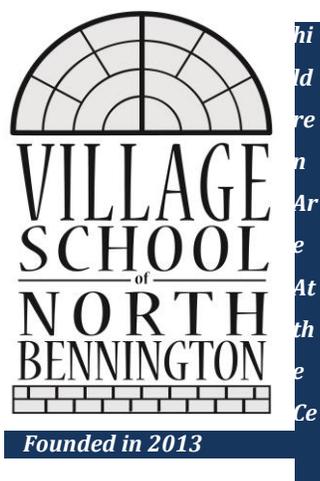
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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Supplies for Bird Houses: | \$50 (10 mixed variety birdhouses, including 5 bluebird houses, at estimated cost of \$5/house including rough lumber, nails and screws. |
| Building assistance for birdhouses: | <i>Donated</i> by local carpenter and other volunteers |
| Labor for preparation of the garden beds: | <i>Donated</i> by 2 to 3 Four Winds and HHG Volunteers with help from students, as appropriate and safe |
| 5 bags of organic composted manure: Additional compost as needed: | \$25 (\$5/50lb bag) <i>Donated</i> by Clearbrook Farm |
| Shrubs, perennials and annuals: (specifics TBD once plants are chosen) | \$165- \$240 estimated; Estimating 10-12 shrubs and perennials at \$15 - \$20 each. <i>Donations will be solicited for annuals and seeds.</i> |
| Labor/expertise in final plant selection: | <i>Donated</i> by Four Winds 4 th / 5 th grade volunteer |
| Mulch: | \$45 (1 yard at \$45/Yard @ Pembroke Landscaping; <i>2nd yard donated 4 Winds volunteer Judie Brower</i>) |
| Trowels for students: | \$27.76 (8 trowels minimum at \$3.47/each) |
| Gloves for students: | \$51.20 (16 child-sized garden gloves at \$3.20/each) |
| Hose and Hose Reel: | \$58.94 (\$28.97 /100' hose; \$29.97 for retracting hose wheel) <i>Purchasing for safety issues so that kids aren't tripping over the hose when it's not in use.</i> |

TOTAL Budget: \$497.90

How will this be maintained after the first year?

The Friends of Hiland Hall Gardens employs a gardener who will help care for this important addition to the campus, especially when school's not in session. Additionally, their summer interns (12 week programs in 2015) and the Village School students, both in the fall and in the spring, will be helping to care for the butterfly garden. Students will determine which seed heads should be left for birds and other wildlife each fall, helping with fresh plantings of annuals each year, and other "care and tending" responsibilities.

Statement of support from school principal, including signature: attached here.



THE VILLAGE SCHOOL OF NORTH BENNINGTON

**P.O. Box 847
9 SCHOOL STREET
NORTH BENNINGTON, VT 05257
802-442-5955**

October 22, 2014

To: The Four Winds Institute

From: Tom Martin, Head of School
Village School of North Bennington

Re: Letter of Support for the School Yard Habitat Improvement Grant

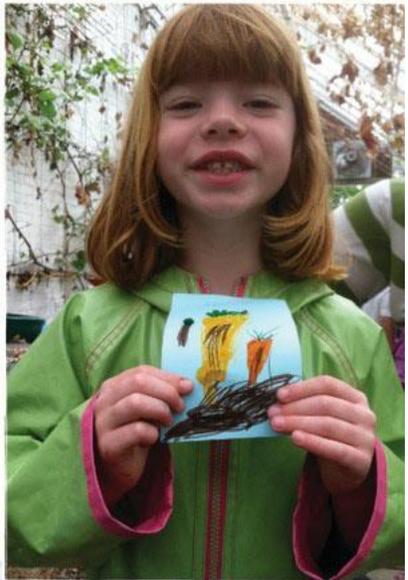
It is with great enthusiasm that I write this letter of support for the Four Winds Program of The Village School of North Bennington application for the School Yard Habitat Improvement Grant. The Four Winds project has been an integral part of our instructional program for many years and we believe has enhanced our sense of community, enriched our children's understanding of their world, and played a significant role in our ongoing school wide success on numerous statewide assessments.

This school yard habitat improvement grant will allow us to enhance our newly developed partnership with Hiland Gardens that is now serving as a living classroom for our entire student body. This grant would support the development of bird and butterfly garden thereby expanding the educational opportunities for our entire student body.

The Village School of North Bennington supports the application of the Four Winds Program for a School Yard Habitat Grant the without reservation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Thomas S. Martin, Head of School
The Village School of North Bennington



Spring 2014

