

# 10 YEARS OF STORIES



## EDUCATION FOUNDATION LEARNING GARDENS SPRING UP ACROSS HUMBLE ISD

We all have heard the age-old metaphor: *teachers plant the seeds that ultimately will bear fruit in their students' minds.*

And, then, there are the Humble ISD educators who are quite literally planting seeds while their students harvest not only fruit, but vegetables, herbs, native plants and the occasional butterfly sanctuary.

Vivian Cardoso, a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade reading coach at Oak Forest Elementary, and Dr. Dorothy Rhoda, Itinerant Teacher with Project Connection at Lone Star College/Kingwood, are two grant recipients of the Humble ISD Education Foundation who have built learning gardens on their campuses. Each of these women will tell you that what has grown in their well-tended grounds is a mere bonus to what has grown in the children they teach.

"The gardens are a source of great pride for the students," says Mrs. Cardoso. "The passion with which they have embraced this program is incredible."

Since receiving an initial grant in 2003, the Oak Forest grounds have blossomed from a small garden to include an orchard, a compost area for parents and residents to dump their grass clippings, a Monarch Butterfly Waystation (certified by the national organization, Monarch Watch) a 5<sup>th</sup> grade garden that is affiliated with Urban Harvest, an arboretum where classes can go, and a special space reserved for the Nature Club, a by-invitation student group that meets before school. Oak Forest is the only school in Texas certified by The Audubon Society, the National Wildlife Federation and Texas Parks & Wildlife.

By comparison, the learning garden at Lone Star College Kingwood is just beginning to bloom. Started with a grant in 2009, the garden enlivens a small patch near the parking lots with flowering plants, vegetables and an inviting potting shed. A small group of students, aged 18-22, all with some form of intellectual or developmental disability, weeds, waters and tends the garden as part of their curriculum.

For Rhoda, the garden has been a "great tool for our students." By observing the garden from seed to ripe strawberry, the students are learning about plant cycles, water supplies, insect habits, and how to problem-solve. The space, she says, has opened the lines of communication between her class and the other students at Lone Star Kingwood who often come out to the garden to work with Project Connection.

In the near future, she hopes to expand the garden and to acquire nearby wetlands for the students to develop and study.

"The Education Foundation has been so wonderful," says Dr. Rhoda. "The initial grant enabled us to get the raw materials to make this happen. We are very, very grateful."

In the Foundation's ten years of existence, over \$3.4 million dollars have been awarded to Humble ISD educators to support innovative classroom enrichment projects in our classrooms. For more information, please visit [www.humbleisd.foundation.org](http://www.humbleisd.foundation.org).

