

# WRENSHALL COMMUNITY ROOTS

By: Jodi Christensen

During the 2021 school year, Wrenshall Public School District utilized special state funds under the Governor's Discretionary American Rescue Plan. These funds were made available for support of academic enrichment, mental health for students, communities, and schools.

Wrenshall's PIE (Partners in Education) collaborated with the school, Alyssa Bloss from the Carlton County SWCD (Soil & Water Conservation District), and Northern Ecological Landscapes based out of Esko, to create large, native plantings on the south and west sides of the school grounds.

The project included a vast pollinator garden in front of the school, with a variety of native Minnesota flowers and grasses to create a habitat for native pollinators such as butterflies, bees, and birds. In addition, the west area of the school was planted with native shrubs and trees to create shade on the playground side of the school.

A portion of the funds was also allocated to build and place garden boxes on the west side of the school. The boxes were built in Mr. Gustafson's class and set up by kindergarten teacher Mrs. George. The entire project was completed in September of 2023, revitalizing and beautifying our school grounds.

We now need to establish a structured volunteer program to maintain and ensure the ongoing success of our school gardens! This will include watering, weeding, pest protection, and general maintenance of the grounds. Depending on participation, we could also assist our maintenance staff by contributing to other outdoor chores like trimming the grass edges around the school.

This is an exciting opportunity to create outdoor experiences for students including pollinator awareness curriculum, outdoor environmental resources and activities, and presentations on the importance of creating and supporting native habitats in our local area.

Next steps are to create a grounds-keeping committee. Misty Bergman from our PIE group came up with the name *Community Roots* and we all agreed it embodies our vision for this evolving project!

In addition, Kevin Kot, our Native American Cultural Liaison, is excited to share his resources and partner with us to expand our learning opportunities and to incorporate the idea of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty includes ensuring access to healthy, appropriate food, produced in a sustainable manner, and controlled by the people who produce and consume it.

Some of his goals are to plant a medicine garden, build a seed keeping program, and utilize outdoor learning spaces. Mr. Kot also plans to create a food garden to be tended by students and used as part



of our school food program. Some of these classes may be accredited in the future.

To find out more information on becoming part of the

committee or volunteering, contact the Wrenshall PIE group at [wrenshallpie@gmail.com](mailto:wrenshallpie@gmail.com) or contact Kevin Kot at [kkot@isd100.org](mailto:kkot@isd100.org).



TO JOIN THE GARDEN GROUNDS-KEEPING COMMITTEE,  
CONTACT WRENSHALL PIE AT [WRENSHALLPIE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:WRENSHALLPIE@GMAIL.COM)  
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