

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between

The Stonington Community Center, Inc.
28 Cutler Street, Stonington CT 06378

and

The Stonington Garden Club, Inc.
P.O. Box 385, Stonington, CT 06378

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) serves to further delineate the long-established MOU agreed upon annually between these two nonprofit partners regarding the partners' roles and responsibilities as they pertain to their collaborative project: the Stonington Children's Learning Garden.

The garden was established in 1997 by the Stonington Community Center and the Stonington Garden Club, both non-profit organizations. The Stonington Children's Garden (renamed the Children's Learning Garden (CLG)) is owned by the Stonington Community Center, Inc and is jointly operated by the Stonington Community Center, Inc. and the Stonington Garden Club, Inc. It is located on the Stonington Community Center campus, Cutler Street, Stonington, CT. The CLG is open to the public, serving as a community resource and place of learning within the larger COMO campus. The garden background and history can be found in the attached addendum.

MOU PURPOSE

The purpose of this MOU is to further elaborate and clarify the partners' roles and responsibilities of this long-standing collaboration between the COMO and SGC.

PARTNER AGREEMENT

Stonington Garden Club Responsibilities

General Duties:

1. A Stonington Garden Club representative is the CLG Chair (or Co-Chairs) and the sole point of communication with the COMO assigned Liaison (Education Director).
2. Meet a minimum of twice annually, pre (April 1) and post (November 1) garden season, to include the SGC President, SGC CLG Chair, COMO Executive Director and COMO Education Director to plan, review and evaluate. All meetings will include minutes.
3. Organize respective SGC committees to identify, propose and lead horticultural and conservation projects in support of the garden's successful season in coordination with the COMO. Completed in the spring.
4. The CLG Chair to share COMO agreed upon COMO garden curricula with CLG volunteers. SGC may provide additional educational horticultural materials, age appropriate, for the COMO to consider.

5. Every 3-4 years conduct soil tests, and incur associated costs. Amend the soil as tests results indicate.
6. Coordinate plant selections with the COMO liaison, as selections will tie to garden curricula set by the COMO for Spring planting. Determine which plants will be sown by CLG volunteers and which will be purchased.
7. Fundraise, as needed, to offset the expenses incurred for garden maintenance in coordination with the COMO's development calendar of fundraising for the larger organization.
8. Share all articles and photos of the garden that are dispersed to the SGC membership (done via its monthly newsletter) with the COMO Executive Director and Education Director.
9. Provide a link to the COMO's Children's Garden webpage on the SGC webpage.

Spring / Summer Season:

1. Spring clean-up of the property (e.g., removal of leaves, branches). Weed and prepare the beds, edge garden; and purchase all plants for beds in anticipation of planting day. Add seaweed to augment soil.
2. Coordinate with the COMO Liaison when spring 'planting day' will occur.
3. On planting day, in coordination with the COMO Liaison provide SGC volunteers to help create an experience for each COMO child.
4. On a weekly basis, provide volunteers to maintain the garden (e.g., weed, add additional plants, pull failing plants and review watering conditions).
5. Coordinate with COMO staff on best time to harvest vegetables.
6. Assist COMO staff with planting additional vegetables.
7. Provide flowers for the Stonington Village Fair Floral Booth.

Fall Season:

1. At the end of growing season, provide volunteers to prepare the CLG for winter (e.g., clean out the beds of prior seasons plants, fertilize, compost the beds).
2. Amend beds by adding compost, and other organic amendments as needed.
3. Schedule and pay for the closing of the sprinkler and drip irrigation system.
4. Plant approximately 200 tulip bulbs.

COMO Responsibilities

1. The garden liaison is the COMO Education Director.
2. Meet a minimum of twice annually, pre (April 1) and post (November 1) garden season, to include the SGC President, SGC CLG Chair, COMO Executive Director and COMO Liaison to plan, review and evaluate. This meeting will serve to: (1) Coordinate all plant selections, as selections will tie to garden curricula set by the COMO; (2) Provide annual wish list of plantings for both flower and vegetable beds to the SGC CLG Chair (e.g., by April 15).

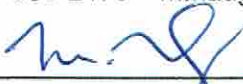
3. Create age-appropriate curricula for COMO youth participants (preschool through elementary aged youth) who will regularly utilize the garden as an outdoor classroom during the school year and summer.
4. Develop an annual wish list of plants to support the garden curricula and provide to the SGC CLG Chair (e.g., by April 15).
5. Utilize the garden's seasonal bounty as part of the garden curricula designed to promote healthy life choices.
6. Provide weekly mowing of the grass and weed-whacking along perimeter fencing edges (within garden area, not outside fence).
7. Provide seasonal access to water source; provide SGC and sprinkler company access to water; and repair watering sources as needed.
8. Annually schedule, in consultation with the SGC CLG Chair spring planting day with preschool students, accompanied by COMO staff, and SGC members.
9. Provide the SGC CLG Chair and SGC President with regular updates of COMO youth utilizing the garden, to include photos and narrative about the curricula being implemented.
10. Assist in the fundraising for the refurbishment of the garden to coordinate with the COMO's own development calendar of annual events and fundraising for the larger organization.
11. Share garden related social media posts with the SGC Communications Chair.
12. Provide Junior Leadership Program participants to work in conjunction with the COMO Liaison and SGC CLG Chair on specifically outlined activities in the garden.

DURATION

This MOU is at-will and may be modified by mutual consent of authorized officials from the COMO and SGC. This MOU shall become effective upon signature by the authorized officials from the COMO and SGC and will remain in effect until modified by mutual consent or terminated by any one of the parties. It is the good faith assumption by both parties that this agreement will enjoy continued longevity of this vital partnership to bring this public resource of a Children's Learning Garden to the community. Either party seeking to terminate the MOU and revert back to the previous operating procedures shall give notice within sixty (60) days of the conclusion of the program year.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Date: 10/10/2023
Matthew Haugen, Executive Director

The Stonington Garden Club, Inc.
Laura Metzger, Co-President
P.O. Box 385
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Stoningtongardenclubpresident@gmail.com



Date: 10/10/2023
Laura Metzger, Co-President

ADDENDUM

The Stonington Children's Garden Background & History

The objective of the garden is to educate and encourage interest in the environment, conservation, community projects and to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening. The mission, as identified in 1997, is to create a unique garden for children and the community that will provide enjoyment, education and enrichment.

The Stonington Community Center, affectionately nicknamed the COMO, was established in 1945 to aid in the physical, social, mental and personal growth of the young people and adults of the local community. The Stonington Garden Club (SGC) was established in 1926 to educate and encourage interest in the environment, conservation, community projects and to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening.

The vision of creating a Children's Garden on the COMO campus originated from a 1996 Stonington Garden Club trip to the Botanical Gardens in Brooklyn, NY. Inspired by a children's space set aside in the gardens, the SGC leadership approached COMO leaders and a committee comprised of SGC and COMO representative was born. The collective work of this committee, which first began discussions in the summer of 1996, culminated with the first Annual Planting Day of the Stonington Children's Garden on May 22, 1997, turning a barren 120'x75' plot of land into an inviting space for learning and discovery. This collaborative endeavor also included monetary donations as well as donations of design services, labor, loam and mulch from community members. The Town of Stonington donated the labor to install a water line and with the support of the Stonington Police Department, a crosswalk. Stonington High School ecology students used the school's greenhouse to raise seedlings, working with the COMO's preschool through elementary aged youth. A dedication ceremony, led by the Stonington Children's Garden Committee, was held on July 25, 1997. Planting Day continues to be an annual intergenerational project bringing COMO youth and SGC members together.

The original agreement, established in 1997, stated that the garden will be administered by the Children's Community Garden Committee, chaired by a member of the SGC, to include three SGC members and 3 COMO representatives.

Additionally:

- "The Stonington Garden Club and the Community Center will work cooperatively and will maintain a mutual understanding of and appreciation for the principles and objectives of their respective organizations."
- "The Garden Club will contribute the horticultural expertise and financial support necessary to develop and maintain a garden for all Stonington children to learn from and enjoy."
- "The Community Center will provide instruction and child supervision essential to the project as well as the land, lawn care, and property insurance."

In 2017-2019 the SGC raised approximately \$26,000 for the complete refurbishment of the garden: new fencing, garden gate, garden arbor, regraded the property, installed 10 cedar raised beds, added a blueberry / strawberry enclosure, relocated the pond, installed a new garden shed, installed a drip irrigation system in the 10 raised beds, planted an apple tree, created a flower bed, installed compost bins, restored and repainted the garden sign.

Since the CLG's inception, COMO and SGC roles and responsibilities outlined in the MOU are regularly reviewed and amended as needed. The approved MOU (and subsequent updates) are stored in the SGC archives at the Stonington Historical Society.