Master Gardener Advisory Committee Minutes  
Sept 5th 2012

Present: Monica David, Tracy Jo Mulliken, Harry Clayton, Pat Kosmach, Joy Gulotta, Shey Lowman, MaryAnne Spinner, Rodger Harfst, Corinna Walker, Brenda Dahlfors, Sonya Lallemand, Jennifer Fishburn, Jennifer Nelson

Via telenet Nancy Kuhajda, Linda Smith, Rachelle Hollinshead

Call to order by Harry Clayton @ 12:34pm  
Minutes: May minutes approved

Four openings on Advisory Committee: NW staff, WC staff, EC staff, S MG

REPORTS:

Staff Updates There are many new MG Coordinators who have come on board this year. Four new educators have also started this year- Kelly Allsup Unit 12, Candice Miller Unit 1 and 2, Kari Houle Unit 14 and Chris Enroth Unit 10. The committee asked Monica to send out the list of new educators and coordinators.

2012 MG Conference- Final registration was 380. McHenry and Lake Counties are sponsoring. Elliot Coleman is the keynote. Lots of great speakers and tours are planned.

Staff Training on “Putting the Pieces Together- Sustainable Youth Gardening” Workshop will be held on Tuesday, Nov 27th in Champaign. This is a PDO for all staff-CDs, educators and program coordinators about youth gardening. Jane Taylor, national expert, will be the keynote. The sponsoring committee is made up of Horticulture, MG Coordinators, 4-H and small farm/local foods staff, so this is a cross team initiative.

Telenet for October 3 @ 1:30 and 7pm for staff and volunteers on “Working with Youth”. This is being presented by Lisa Diaz and Madonna Weese from 4-H. It is an educational and CE opportunity for our MG volunteers and staff.

2013 Trainings Face to face training will be offered at 18 locations. Online training will also be offered. Rhonda Ferree and Andrew Holsinger will try facing time and broadcasting to two other sites via their I Pads in Units 15 and 18. A live instructor will broadcast to 2 other locations. Monica hopes this new technology will be useful in the future for areas of the state which still do not have many educators- i.e. the EC and S areas of the state.

Taped Elluminate Sessions Links are on the coordinator site for the sessions. These are used to make-up missed trainings but may also work for CE for active MGs. The group suggested that Monica email the MG Coordinators about this. It was suggested that the coordinators send the links out to volunteers upon request or have them available at a scheduled time- rather than just sending all the links out to every MG.
**Updates from Units** MaryAnne Spinner reported that Cook County is working to restore the funding cuts made by their county board but no word yet on whether this was successful.

**DISCUSSIONS:**

Jennifer Fishburn is looking for resources on heirloom flowers. She suggested that this might be a topic for a possible future telnet.

There was discussion on whether non-exempt employees (program coordinators and secretarial staff) can volunteer as MGs. Here is the clarification from Kathy Seybert, Director ACES HR- The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) defines employment very broadly, i.e., "to suffer or permit to work." However, the Supreme Court has made it clear that the FLSA was not intended "to stamp all persons as employees who without any express or implied compensation agreement might work for their own advantage on the premises of another." In administering the FLSA, the Department of Labor follows this judicial guidance in the case of individuals serving as unpaid volunteers in various community services. Individuals who volunteer or donate their services, usually on a part-time basis, for public service, religious or humanitarian objectives, not as employees and without contemplation of pay, are not considered employees of the religious, charitable or similar non-profit organizations that receive their service.

Under the FLSA, employees may not volunteer services to for-profit private sector employers. On the other hand, in the vast majority of circumstances, individuals can volunteer services to public sector employers. When Congress amended the FLSA in 1985, it made clear that people are allowed to volunteer their services to public agencies and their community with but one exception - public sector employers may not allow their employees to volunteer, without compensation, additional time to do the same work for which they are employed. There is no prohibition on anyone employed in the private sector from volunteering in any capacity or line of work in the public sector.

**2013 State Conference** The conference will be held Sept 16, 17, 18th at the I wireless Center in Moline and will be hosted by Unit 7 volunteers. Sleeping rooms are being reserved at the Radisson and Stoney Creek Inn. The committee had some discussion on the benefits and drawbacks of a 2 versus 3 day conference. Suggestion of keynote: Pearl Fryer topiary gentleman.

**Advanced Training Guidelines** were handed out. It has been proposed to change the Advanced Master Naturalist certification to an Advanced Ecology certification. Motion by Shey and seconded by Marianne. Motion passed- the changes are now made. Monica will have new pins designed.

**Volunteer Paperwork** Monica and Sheri Seibold from 4-H have met with legal counsel over the past year to make the application, screening paperwork and policies more
uniform across volunteer program areas. The new application has significant changes and
the MG application will not require references. The document includes different verbiage
on checking criminal background and allows counties to check “other sources as
necessary”. The committee suggested having a base of interview questions to use when
volunteers assist staff in interviewing potential candidates. The Master Gardeners who
assist with interviews of potential trainees should sign letters of confidentiality. The
annual volunteer agreement will be electronic but the photo release will need a real
signature. A wet signature is needed on the application, screening documents and photo
release- this can be an electronic scan or fax of an original signature. Monica also
introduced 2 new “Agreement to Assume Risk” forms. One is optional, for use at MG
events with some degree of risk and the second form is for youth gardening. There were
questions about the youth gardening form and when it needs to be used. Monica will
check on this and give out the information at the staff webinar on policy changes to be
held on Oct 11.

Advisory Committee Bi-Laws
The following changes were adopted:
1. VI. Terms of Assignment- this was changed to having dates of appointment following
the calendar year.
2. Change ‘center staff’ to read ‘staff’ in sections VI and VIII.
3. IV Clarify what regions are for #1 and #2. The committee will continue to base
membership on the old 5 Extension regions. Need to list counties or include a map with
the bylaws. Motion by Brenda seconded by Pat K. Passed.

Monica has asked all counties to submit their county bylaws to her. County bylaws
cannot supersede state or Extension policies on HR issues, fiscal, volunteer termination,
screening of volunteers or risk management. Local bylaws should focus on committee
structures, implementation of projects and election of local officers.

Shey will send Monica a document she created for MGs about handling money. This
needs to be reviewed by John Horton.

IPM Modules 34+ MGs have completed one or more of the online modules. Monica
needs to promote these more for use by MGs. It was suggested to put the wording ‘0.5
hours of CEU’ on the certificate. Monica and Stephanie Porter and Kelly Estes are
working on 4-5 more modules and hope to release several more by early 2013.

IL Department of Corrections Monica was contacted by Jennifer Billingsley from
Lakeland College in Mattoon. She would like to have jail inmates take MG training in her
county. All 18 IL community colleges would like to do this in the prisons across the state.
Currently inmates can take 32 hours of coursework for a certificate. They do outreach by
raising veggies and participating in PAR. They would like these inmates to become
certified MGs. The committee decided that they did not want to offer this education, that
we did not have the staff to conduct the trainings and we did not want the Junior college
professors to teach the MG course or use our logo or name. They felt that this request was
only made to piggyback on the U of I Extension Master Gardener name and resources.
Mini-Grants Revisions to the guidelines: include what will be funded/what will not be funded-technology, permanent building structures, space rental, honorariums, utilities, mechanically driven equipment and other items as committee deems fit will not be funded. A sentence should be added to the application asking if the project was previously awarded a mini grant. Applicants should expand on educational goals as far as impact and short term and long term goals. We should request a brief summary of project pictures if possible. The committee also added wording that the receipts need to be included by Jan 31st. A signature by the Horticulture educator, program coordinators or Unit director needs to be included. Add wording under how much is available -ONLY one grant may be awarded per year per county. By the amount of money add a line stating that the committee will give preference to projects which demonstrate strong educational impact. It was suggested that when applications are sent out for 2013- include an example of a really well written application.

Other Discussion It was suggested to have a webinar for MG’s on what constitutes impact and how we measure it. This might be in conjunction with the release of the mini-grants for 2013.

Monica asked the committee to brainstorm priorities for the program in the next 22 months before she retires. There was discussion on replacing Monica’s position and she stated that she has support from Mike Gray and German Bolero to replace the state coordinator.

Future Meetings
- November 13th- campus or telenet
- February 11th Monday by telenet
- May 15th Champaign
- September 18th Moline