

Spontaneous plans yield community garden

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Not knowing the impact his Pisgah View Community Peace Garden would have on the Asheville youth community, Bob White planted a few seeds two years ago, purchased with the \$2 he had in his pocket.

"I was in my house listening to music, and a little voice came into my head that said, 'Start a community garden,'" White said with a serious look in his eyes. "I had no earthly idea about gardening, but I knew something needed to happen to make this a better place."

Two weeks later he said he debated with the voice in his head until he asked the manager of Pisgah View apartment complex, one of Asheville's public housing projects, if he could use a 10-by-30 foot piece of land near the outskirts of the property.

"It was like a movie. The manager looked at the supervisor and then looked at me and said, 'OK,'" he said, laughing. "They said I could take the ball field."

White, a carpenter by trade, had no source of income at the time and started his garden by planting a package of seeds he purchased with the only money he had.

"I felt lost when I first got out there," he said. "I had no tools, no money and nobody to help me. I just went home. But that voice kept coming back in my head



Rachel Letcher - Contributing Photographer
Brooke Rogers, head of healthy cooking classes for the Pisgah View community peace garden helps two-year old Elijah Rogers water plants.

and, about two weeks later, this woman came by and said she could help and connected me with some people."

A student from Warren Wilson College encouraged White to ask for donations and took him out to the college, where he borrowed a tiller and other equipment.

"That's when it got magic, when that lady came to help me," he said.

A nursery in Swannanoa donated a thousand different types of tomato plants, more than 400 pepper plants, herbs like basil and parsley and a variety of flowers to the up-and-coming organic garden.

A church donated a chicken coop, situated in the greenhouse made of plastic, where White plans on selling eggs and, eventually, the chickens. Community members donated their time and spare tools to White's project.

"When I started to get to work tilling the field, a bunch of kids were standing by the fence and were asking to help," he said. "I said 'Yeah, it's your garden.'" They started breaking up the soil and the rows were all zigzagged, but everything

SEE GARDEN PAGE 15 |

Poetry

works explores the impact of his father's exile from China and political imprisonment on Lee's own private life, according to Hope-Gill. The Belarusian poet Valzhyna Mort's work bears witness to political oppression in her homeland.

"Each reading presents a variety of cultures and aesthetics because the poets who dreamed this up wanted a festival that truly is about diversity in all directions—male, female, cultural, racial, physical ability, tradition and context," Hope-Gill said. Funded by the North Carolina Arts Council and the North Carolina Humanities Council, Wordfest also allows local organizations and individuals the opportunity to sponsor a specific poet of interest.

"By this we mean if you like a certain poet, or share the values and passions of a poet, you can pull together a donation

that will go toward bringing that poet to Asheville," Hope-Gill explains. "For instance, local publisher Grateful Steps Press is sponsoring Ekiwah Adler Belendez's reading, because his being here reflects the press' interest in multiculturalism and celebrating difference."

Poets Ross Gay and Patrick Rosal were co-sponsored by the undergraduate creative writing program at Warren Wilson College to support the rising poet's works, according to Hope-Gill.

"The essential purpose is to bring people together from many different communities. We present a poet lineup that reflects the real population, from 20 different cultural and aesthetic backgrounds," Hope-Gill said. "I think that, through the sponsor-a-poet idea, the community can use the festival as a way of magnifying their

ideas and values."

Wordfest's sponsors include the Mountain Area Information Network, the Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, Hookah Joe's, UNC Asheville, Bobo Gallery, Malaprop's Bookstore and Café, Book Works and Rivendell.

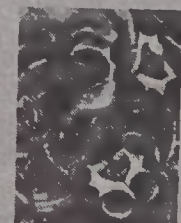
"We're taking poetry high-tech with the live webcast. We were the first festival to do this," Hope-Gill said.

Hope-Gill anticipates views from Africa, Britain and Spain for this year's Wordfest Internet coverage, due to recent promotion of the festival on both Facebook and Twitter.

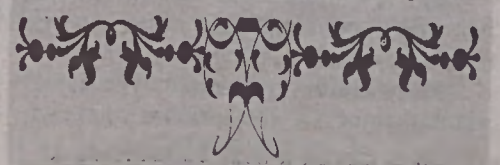
"Asheville Wordfest brings together amazing poets both local and national, and the people who write for their own personal pleasure and survival," Hope-Gill said.



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8