

"As far as the history of it [the garden], students probably had this idea 50 years ago, and it got rejected. We just came along at the right time with the right moment, the right energy and the right sense of demand that this needs to happen. We knew what we wanted and we knew we would get it, and that's kind of the attitude that gets things done."

Will Erker
Senior

GARDEN | Students create community garden filled with flowers, vegetables

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"The idea behind making it aesthetically pleasing is we want the garden to be a place that's welcoming and approachable for everyone in the community, not just people within the organization, and making it a place that's beautiful has a big hand in encouraging that," May said.

Because the garden is just getting started, May's current efforts have centered around the layout of the garden itself. As a result of her planning, the group will be planting its seeds in circular formations instead of traditional rows, and construction has begun on a wooden structure doubling as an arbor for climbing plants and as an entryway into the main garden.

They also have constructed the Post of Inspiration, which is a wooden beam in the middle of the garden on which the group will affix arrows with the names of places that have inspired them. Only one arrow has been created so far, reading "Ceder Rapids, Iowa," in gratitude to a youth group that worked with them in the garden as a form of community service.

May hopes to make more artistic additions in the future once functionality is not as much of a priority. Her ideas include exhibiting student-made statuary and sign cards that explain each of the plants. She also plans to make cob benches, which are benches made of organic materials such as mud and clay, and then decorate them with mosaics of tile and glass.

"The garden is a chance to break down the walls between the community and the University," May said. "That's why it's the Communiversity Garden. I hope it will be a place where people can go to just hang out."

Michael Kelrick, the Communiversity Garden's group adviser, said he considers the chance to reunite people with nature — not only those who are working in it, but also those who observe it — the most significant aspect of the garden.

"I think many people are very disconnected from their own source of sustenance, and the garden is a way of reminding people and celebrating it," Kelrick said. "To foster the growth of something is just a wholesome activity."

Sojourner's offers culture

Historical Places

Two women temporarily living in Kirksville created women's club

BY SHANNON WALTER
Staff Reporter

The oldest women's club in Kirksville still carries on after 113 years.

Two women looking for social engagements, culture and philanthropy in Kirksville established the Sojourner's Club in 1897. Club historian Marietta Jayne said that at the time, Kirksville had a population of 9,000, and 1,000 of those people were temporary residents seeking treatment at the American School of Osteopathy (now A.T. Still University).

Julia Foraker, one of the founders and the wife of a U.S. Senator, was in Kirksville seeking treatment for her young son. Cora McDonald, head of the English department of the University of Chicago, was the other founder, also in Kirksville seeking treatment at the hospital.

"The meaning of 'sojourner' is someone who is temporarily living someplace," Jayne said. "[The founders] were here for a short period of time, so they got together to have some sort of social life while they were here."

Foraker held the first meeting in her house, in which she gave an English and literature lesson. She sold tickets, and the money was used to buy books for Kirksville's first library. By 1904, the club had collected about 1,000 books.

The club began with 25 members and gradually grew to more than 200 after a few decades, according to the Sojourner's Club 2009-10 yearbook. These growing numbers forced the club to rent meeting rooms around town to meet as a whole group. By

1916, the ladies raised enough money through dues and fundraisers to build a clubhouse at 216 S. Elson St. for \$35,000.

"Irwin Dunbar was the architect," Jayne said. "When they moved in they still owed \$2,500, and my uncle's sister loaned them the money. When she died, her sisters canceled the loan in her memory. So, my family has been involved for quite awhile."

Jayne joined the club in her early 20s as a third-generation member. After building their clubhouse, the women devoted their time to many endeavors besides culture and literature. Meeting every Saturday, the club worked toward bettering the community. They were responsible for a restroom and waiting room in the courthouse, paving the road in front of the clubhouse and building a watering trough for horses on The Square. They also were involved in several charities.

"My grandmother was secretary treasurer of the board of charity," Jayne said. "So we used to have clothes and baskets of coal in our basement. My grandmother was known as the mother of charity, because there were no government agencies in those days to help poor people."

The club's greatest achievement was building and maintaining a public library, according to the Sojourner's Club 2009-10 yearbook. The club worked for years to establish a tax-supported library. When the club could no longer afford the building, they gave over the use of their building to the Adair County Public Library until construction of that library was complete. Upon completion, the club donated 30,000 books to the new library. The public library still is the club's largest philanthropy.

Member and former president Harriet Beard joined the club after she married her husband about 60 years ago. She said the club was perfect for her because she wanted a social activity outside of caring for her family.

The club currently has about



Photos courtesy of Pickler Special Collections
The Adair County Historical Society (top) purchased the Sojourner's clubhouse after it was restored (bottom).

100 members who are primarily older women, making many of their traditions old-fashioned.

"Something that I find most interesting is that even still in this age, we never use our first names," Beard said. "In all the records, it never says Harriet Beard. It's always Mrs. Walter Beard Jr."

Jayne agreed with Beard, adding that men who are widowed and remarried to another woman in the club cause confusion about which wife is which in their records.

Beard said that the Sojourner's Club has traditionally been an all-women's club, but they would welcome men.

"Many of the men's service clubs in town have been infiltrated by women," she said. "My husband was devastated when the first woman joined his all-male club. So far, the men have not invaded ours or any of the other women's clubs."

The Adair County Historical Society purchased the clubhouse in 1998 for their use.

"There have been many literary and social organizations in Kirksville, but of all of them probably the one that has proved the most effective in its various activities has been the Sojourner's Club," said E.M. Violette in "The History of Adair County."

Local gives food, shelter to needy

hometown Heroes

BY SHAWN SHINNEMAN
Assistant Features Editor

He is the man many people in Adair County turn to when they are in financial trouble. He helps provide food and shelter to the desperate and spiritual guidance to those struggling to find meaning in life.

He taught at Truman for 35 years, has been a pastor at various area churches and, since his spiritual rebirth in the mid-1970s, is constantly looking to serve any and all people he comes across.

He is local resident Don Kangas, a 67-year-old community philanthropist who co-founded the Food Depot in the late 1970s and recently established the Isaiah 58 fund for the underprivileged at Timber Ridge Community Church.

And he is, by nearly every definition, a hometown hero. But he won't admit it. In fact, Kangas can't help but laugh at the notion.

"I just try to do what I feel like I'm supposed to be doing," Kangas said.

His humility can't cover up an adult life filled with selflessness. He said he wholeheartedly believes we are all brothers and sisters. He often gives money from his own pocket to people who are hungry or need a place to stay.

"Don Kangas is just the type of person who helps people," said local resident Steve Youngblood, who has worked closely with Kangas. "If someone is in town and doesn't have a place to stay, call Don Kangas. He pulls money out of his pockets and puts them up in [a] hotel. It's on a regular basis."

Kangas' compassion for helping people runs deep, and he's full of stories that depict how it came about.

He said that when he was 16 years old and visiting his

grandparents on their farm in South Carolina, he met the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. Her name was Derby, she had long brown hair with a face that Kangas remembers as nearly flawless and, as it turned out, her father and brother were stricken with polio, forcing the entire family into extreme poverty.

Kangas never had a shot with Derby — when he returned the following summer, she had found a new guy — but the story has stuck with him.

"I saw, up close, someone poorer than me," Kangas said. It is a story from a childhood that taught Kangas to be tolerant of others. His parents raised him to be a strong Christian.

On those hot summer days in South Carolina, he saw his grandmother give household items — milk,

sugar, freshly churned butter — to anyone who would come by and ask, regardless of skin color.

But still, Kangas said his beliefs faltered as an undergraduate at the University of Maryland. It wasn't until he received a job at Truman to teach biology and ecology that Kangas started once again to attend church.

Soon, the generosity Kangas had acquired as a kid began to show in his adult life. He said he began thinking of ways to get local churches to collaborate to provide for the needs of those in poverty. Eventually, the Food Depot was born, providing food for the hungry.

Kangas is no longer associated with the Food Depot. Now, he formally helps people through the Isaiah 58 fund, which puts community donations toward the homeless and the hungry.

But Kangas constantly finds opportunities to help people in other ways. Judy Booth, a member of Kangas' church, said she was blown away by the amount of care Kangas and his wife, Geanne, showed her while she was

going through a tough time. The couple invited Booth into their house and cared for her for two weeks when Booth developed pneumonia shortly after going through a divorce.

Booth said Kangas served as a spiritual mentor for her, helping her get back on her feet and inspiring her to get what she wanted from life.

"He loves a person in a way that they don't even realize they have flaws," Booth said. "And that is a powerful thing because that really gives people a self-esteem [boost so] that they can go on and be someone that perhaps they wouldn't have been had they not known him."

Kangas is now four years into retirement from teaching, but he continues to serve the community — giving to the needy, instilling morals in those with next to none and listening to people who often are ignored.

He said he will never stop caring for people and valuing the interests of others as his own.

"I'm 67 now," Kangas said. "I'll continue as long as I'm here."

"He loves a person in a way that they don't even realize they have flaws."

Judy Booth
Member of Kangas' church

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