

# Lessons from the Field: Volunteers and Accessibility



# Welcome

- Panel Introductions
- At-a-glance: Working with volunteers with disabilities
- Institutional Profiles
- Questions, Comments & Shared Experiences



# Panel Introductions

Moderator:

**Elizabeth Barton**, United States Botanic Garden

Panel:

**Maura Nelson**, United States Botanic Garden

**Taylor Burnham**, Naples Botanical Garden


**Sarah Allred**, Ashton Gardens at Thanksgiving Point

**Heather Veneziano**, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden

**Kathy Castaneda**, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden

At-a-glance	U.S. Botanic Garden	Naples Botanical Garden	Ashton Gardens	Santa Barbara Botanic Garden	Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden
Regular schedule		✓	✓	✓	
Episodic/Seasonal	✓		✓		✓
Youth (Teen)		✓			✓
Young Adult (18-35)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adult/Older Adult (36+)	✓	✓		✓	✓
Individual	✓	✓			
Group		✓		✓	✓
Program/Intern	✓		✓	✓	✓

Maura Nelson  
United States Botanic Garden  
Accessibility Coordinator



**Institutional Buy-In & Commitment**



# UNITED STATES BOTANIC GARDEN

- Established by Congress in 1820
- Location: Washington, D.C.
- Welcomes over 1 million visitors annually
- 200 Volunteers







# Draft USBG 5-Year Access Action Plan (2018-2022)



## **USBG Access Statement**

The United States Botanic Garden (USBG) is committed to the concepts of universal design to promote the inclusion of all visitors and team members.

## **USBG Access Vision**

The USBG embraces accessibility as an organizational value. It is sustained by an access team and to the greatest extent possible, reflected through our horticultural practices, design of exhibits, public programming, facilities maintenance and services.

# Morgane Clark, USBG Volunteer Since 2015

Self-identifies:

- Cerebral Palsy
- Learning disabilities
- Post-traumatic stress syndrome
- Member of Cool Aspies - young adult social club for individuals with ASD

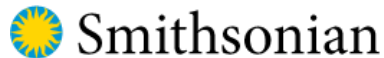


# Preparing young people with significant disabilities for success in integrated, competitive employment.



## Program

The Project SEARCH Transition-to-Work Program is a unique, business-led, one-year employment preparation program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations. The program culminates in individualized job development.



UNITED STATES  
BOTANIC GARDEN





Linden  
RESOURCES

QUALITY SERVICES. ENRICHING LIVES.



Taylor Burnham  
Naples Botanical Garden  
Buehler Enabling Garden Coordinator



Onsite Programming



# Naples Botanical Garden

GARDENS with LATITUDE

- Year Opened: 2009
- Location: Naples, Florida
- Operating Budget: \$7M
- Annual Attendance: 220,000
- Staff: 100
- Acreage: 170





# Overview of Volunteer Program

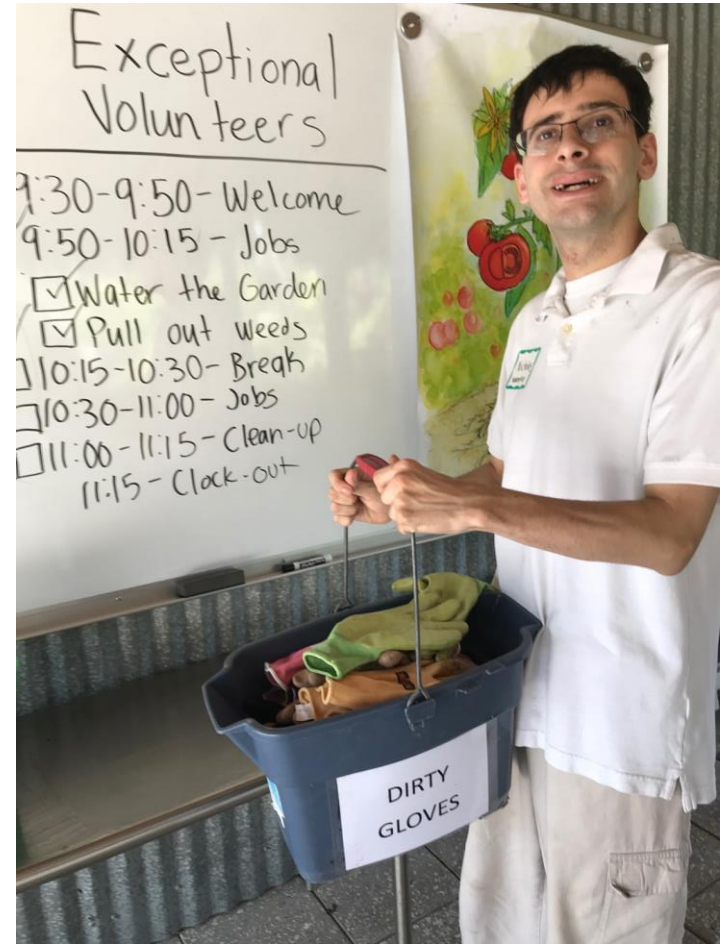
- Active Volunteers:  
450
- Budget: \$29k
- Average Age: 81



# Exceptional Volunteers



# Exceptional Volunteers



# Exceptional Volunteers



# Recipe for Success



# Strengths-Based

I like to go to the Botanical Garden.  
I like to go to see Thomas.  
And Taylor.  
And Debbie.  
And Jonathan.  
And Jim.  
And Sara.  
And all the Guys.  
I like to type numbers on the Computer.  
I like to go to put Numbers.  
And I like the stems because their White.  
I like to see sally types on the Computer.  
I like to look out the Window.  
I like to water the Hose.  
I like to look at the Black Picture.  
I like to smile at the Camera.  
I like to look at the Dirt.  
I like to look at the Rock.  
I like to look at the Mouse.  
I like to look at Everyone at Superman.  
I like to put on some green Shirt.  
I like to get a Drink.  
I like to drink Water.



-Michael

# Strengths-Based



“[I come to the Garden] because you guys need my help, of course!”  
-Jonathan

# Strengths-Based







# Supportive

“The best part of our gathering is the question of the day where we really are getting to know each other. I don’t see ‘disabilities,’ I just see people. What I am taking away from all this is no matter who you are or what your abilities are, we all have exceptional qualities.”  
-Cynthia

# Supportive



# Supportive





# Social

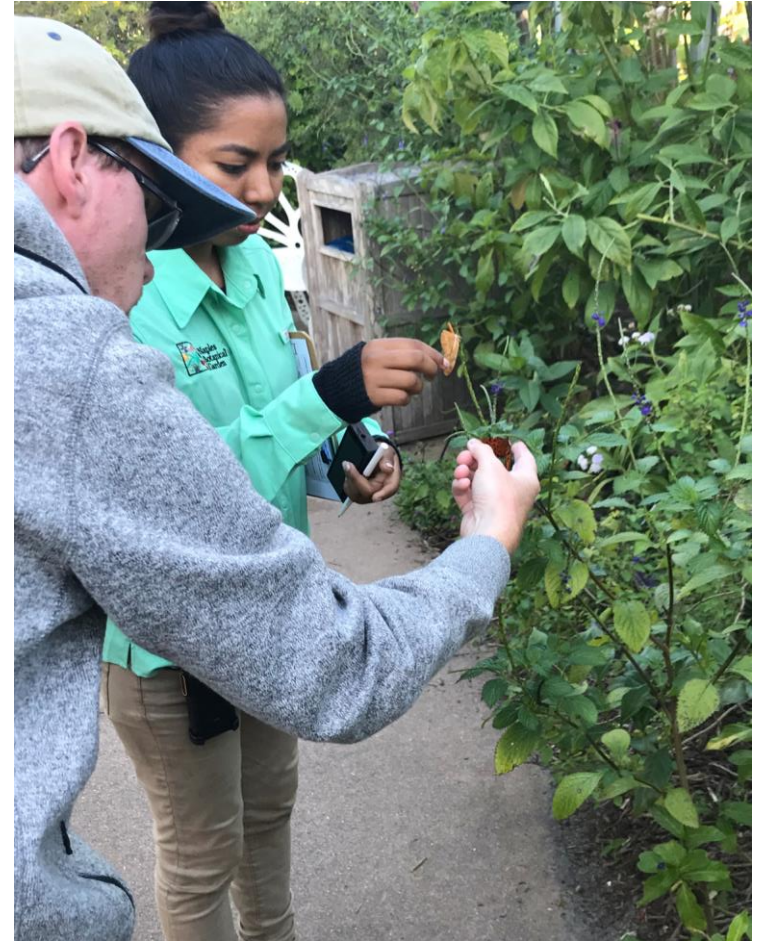
“I did not expect for the garden and my fellow gardeners to become part of my family, and in one short season that is precisely what has transpired. Because of this bond, I will be there all summer; heat and rain cannot keep me from its delights. Emily Dickinson says it best: ‘Have I a word but joy?’” -Lisa

# Social



# Next Steps

1. Empower volunteers to lead
2. Increase visibility
3. Strive for inclusivity





“Use every opportunity to help others see meaning in their work. They will be transformed from bricklayers to cathedral builders.”

-Randy Lewis, *No Greatness Without Goodness*

Sarah Allred  
Ashton Gardens at Thanksgiving Point  
Horticulture Coordinator



Utilizing Your Volunteers to Improve  
or Create Your Program



# ASHTON GARDENS

THANKSGIVING POINT • LEHI, UTAH



- Year Opened: 2000
- Location: Lehi, Utah
- Operating Budget: \$1.4 M
- Annual Attendance: 100,000
- Staff: 50 full/part time
- Acreage: 5



# Volunteer Program

- Program began in 2016
- Budget: Still working on it
- Typical Volunteer Age: 25-70 years old
- Number of Volunteers: 500 property wide (60-80 at Ashton Gardens)



# Accessibility Program Details

## Goal:

- Partner with the Alpine Transition and Education Center (ATEC) to provide internship and volunteer opportunities.
- 3 shifts a week
- Provide summer employment for 1-2 interns.



# Initial Observations

- The interns weren't able to do all of the tasks on their own. Some of them didn't even know how to use the tools.
- Their coaches were worried about getting the tasks done instead of creating a good learning experience for the interns.
- It was taking a lot of unplanned extra time for our staff members.
- As staff we didn't feel that we had the necessary skills to make this a successful partnership.

# Our Big Idea

- Reach out to our current volunteers to see who may have specialized skills and talents to create or improve volunteer opportunities for people with differing abilities.
- Reached out to other members of our current staff for support.

# Solutions: Interview interns

- Get to know interns.
- Learn from coaches.
- Find out personal motivations.
- Practice for future job interviews.



# Solutions: Intern Training

- Break down the tasks.
- Practice using the tools.
- Teach a little plant science.
- Encourage independence.
- Review expectations ( sign in, gather tools, work, return tools, etc.)



# Coaching, Mentoring and Staff Training

- Express expectations clearly.
- Emphasize that it is not just about getting things done.
- Teach mentoring best practices when working with the ATEC interns.
- Educate staff on those same best practices.





# What Success Looks Like

*“I am just so grateful to be able to use my professional skills and experience and combine it with my love of gardening!”*



- Better experience for volunteers, interns, and staff.
- More meaningful learning experience for interns.
- Ability to offer job placement to 2 interns at the end of the garden volunteer season.

# Next Steps

- Review trainings
- Educate and recruit more mentoring volunteers
- Look into expanding the program with other organizations.



Heather Veneziano  
Lewis Ginter Botanic Garden  
Youth Programs Developer



Vocational Training

# LEWIS GINTER BOTANICAL GARDEN

- Opened to the public: 1984
- Location: Richmond, VA
- Operating Budget: 7.4M
- Annual Attendance:  
400,000
- Staff: 83 full time equivalent



*Connecting people through plants to  
improve communities*

- Volunteers: 734
- Acreage: 80

# Vocational Volunteer Program

- Program began in 2009
- Workplace readiness skills:
  - Task vary based on skills
  - Project based learning
  - Internship (4 to 5 months)





We work with local schools and organizations to provide work experience for youth and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

# Project Based Learning





Projects change based of the season and the needs for the garden. Students helping to decorate a wildlife tree for the holidays.





Student getting the cafe in the garden ready before lunch.

Task that the students are doing are helping the garden. These give the students a sense of pride, responsibility and confidence.



We work closely with the teachers at the schools to make sure the jobs are a good fit with what they are teaching the students.



Students helping to remove lights after holiday event.

# Challenges

- Comfort level of staff
- Groups completing projects in a timely manner
- Meeting all the requests from community
- Knowing when to say “no”



# Moving Forward!

- Expanding programs- working in other areas of the campus independently

Kathy Castaneda  
The Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens  
Manager of Volunteer Programs



Maximizing Resources



**PASSION KNOWS NO LIMITS**

**Maximizing Available Resources to  
Create an Inclusive Volunteer Community**

# The Santa Barbara Botanic GARDEN

- Established in 1926
- Operating Budget= 3M
- Annual Attendance= 60,000
- 52 staff
- 88 acres
- Average Age of volunteer= 62
- 424 volunteers in 2017





# Resources

Community Partners

Volunteer Leaders

Grant Funding



# Resources

Nature Heals

Goodwill

Networking





# Building Community

“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”

*~ John Muir*

# Questions, Comments & Shared Experiences



# Stay in Touch

Elizabeth Barton, [elizabeth.barton@aoc.gov](mailto:elizabeth.barton@aoc.gov)

Maura Nelson, [mnelson@aoc.gov](mailto:mnelson@aoc.gov)

Taylor Burnham, [TBurnham@naplesgarden.org](mailto:TBurnham@naplesgarden.org)

Sarah Allred, [sallred@Thanksgivingpoint.org](mailto:sallred@Thanksgivingpoint.org)

Heather Veneziano, [heatherv@lewisginter.org](mailto:heatherv@lewisginter.org)

Kathy Castaneda, [kcastaneda@sbbg.org](mailto:kcastaneda@sbbg.org)