

**For Immediate Release**

**May 14, 2024**

**FULLERTON SCHOOL DISTRICT**

***Nurse Susan Helps Spread Joy at Woodcrest Elementary School***



**(Fullerton, CA)** - In honor of Nurse Appreciation Week this school year, Fullerton School District (FSD) is spotlighting Nurse Susan Cravello for helping spread warmth and joy at Woodcrest Elementary School. In 2022, Nurse Susan voluntarily took over the care of the garden at Woodcrest Elementary, and it has since blossomed into a community-building space for Woodcrest Elementary's students and staff.

Starting with a clean slate, Nurse Susan contacted a Master Gardener in Orange County who donated his time to help plan the garden. With the needed soil donated from Kellogg Organics and seeds donated from Roger's Gardens, Nurse Susan set off to nurture the garden space. With the support of school administration and a list of "garden helpers," Nurse Susan created the Wildcat Friendship Garden. With all students in mind and with helpful assistance from Woodcrest's special education staff, the garden is designed as a space where students can have a full sensory experience by seeing the garden's beauty, smelling its fragrances, and even tasting and feeling some areas of this space.

During the recent LOVE Fullerton event, Nurse Susan worked alongside community volunteers and FSD Superintendent Dr. Bob Pletka to give the garden special care and install a new trellis. This addition has further contributed to the charm of the garden, whose splendor is also magnified by the presence of monarch butterflies that are drawn to the garden's natural foliage.

Taking full advantage of the garden's offerings, Nurse Susan worked with a former FSD student who created a reading area near the garden as a service project. The Wildcat Friendship Garden and the reading area have proved to be a peaceful space for students when needed and give student helpers a sense of purpose and accomplishment.

In addition to working with student and staff garden helpers, Nurse Susan says that the Wildcat Friendship Garden has also drawn in helpers from the community. Unprompted, Kenny, a community member with autism contacted Nurse Susan looking to donate to the garden. This contact resulted in a connection between the two, as Kenny, who finds joy in starting seedlings, made a donation to the garden's maintenance, and now, works alongside Nurse Susan on the weekends to tend the garden.

Adding to the beauty of the Wildcat Friendship Garden, Nurse Susan brought Birdhouse Gourds to Woodcrest Elementary. She also worked with special education teachers to decorate the garden with the fingerprints of special education students. The end product was beautifully decorated birdhouses complementing the garden.

What's Nurse Susan's secret agenda for the garden? To make the Sweet Pea everyone's favorite flower. She further shared that she hopes for the garden to be a safe space of joy, calm, serenity, exploration, and friendship where she can continue to share her passion for gardening that was passed on to her from her grandfather. When asked what would make the garden even better, Nurse Susan shared her wish list of a long hose and cocoa mulch.

"The Wildcat Friendship Garden brings people together and really lives up to its name," Nurse Susan said with pride. "That makes me happy!"

FSD and its Wildcat community have resonated with gratitude for the time, energy, and resources Nurse Susan donates to the garden and to enrich the lives of others.

The Fullerton School District is located in northern Orange County, California, and serves over 11,600 students in grades TK – 8<sup>th</sup>. The Fullerton School District includes 21 schools, 15 elementary schools, two K-8<sup>th</sup> grade schools, three middle schools, and a distance learning and home school model. The mission of the Fullerton School District is to work collaboratively with the community to provide an innovative, high-quality educational program for all students in a safe learning environment. The District motto, "*Great Schools - Successful Kids*" exemplifies the belief that all students will achieve academic excellence, acquire interpersonal skills, and develop technological expertise to contribute as productive citizens in a democratic society. For more information, call 714/447-7400 or visit [www.fullertonsd.org](http://www.fullertonsd.org).

###

*For more information, please feel free to contact Amber Muñoz/Public Information Officer,  
Fullerton School District at 657/706-3774 or [amber\\_munos@myfsd.org](mailto:amber_munos@myfsd.org)*





*Fullerton School District School Nurse Susan Cravello (front right) tending to Woodcrest Elementary School's Wildcat Friendship Garden with garden helpers, including Superintendent Dr. Bob Pletka (bottom left)*



*More than just flowers grow in this multi-sensory garden experience for Wildcat students and staff.*



*Butterflies attracted to the garden's foliage are an additional delightful sight.*



*Nurse Susan (far right) and her faithful garden helpers.*