

## Community Gardens welcome new residents

By John Carpenter  
Gazette Staff

Community gardens are not something new in this country, but the gardens in Columbus Junction have a new twist. Monica Escabeles lives on the pavement to Columbus City, and she saw a need, and took the step to help.

Monica moved to Columbus Junction 19 years ago when we were experiencing an influx of new Latino residents. She remembers help that she received in getting settled here, and has decided to now offer her help to a new wave of residents.

Monica discovered that the new Burmese residents in town miss tilling the soil and producing much of their own food, so she tilled up some ground on her property and offered it to these new arrivals for gardens.

"My family received a lot of help when we settled here, so I wanted to try and do my part," said Monica. She doesn't charge anything for the garden space, only charging a small fee if they want to hook up hoses to her water supply.

Monica's sister, Nitza Castillo, works for the Community Development Center and originally saw the need for garden spaces, so she contacted Monica to see if she could help. Monica was quick to agree, and word went out to the Burmese community.

Now today, through the actions of these two sisters who recalled their



The community gardens at Monica Escabeles' home

own struggles of settling in to a strange new place, a new wave of citizens are making roots, in their jobs and homes, and now literally in their gardens, to become valuable citizens in our community.

Growth and prosperity require acceptance and the desire to help, and Monica and Nitza are shining examples of two sisters who have embraced this attitude of giving back to those in need.

The growth of new residents is an asset we can be thankful for, something many small midwestern towns lack, and these types of actions are what will help ensure a bright future for the Columbus Community.

## Four Columbus students visit Spain

On May 25, four Columbus teenagers carrying only school-size backpacks left for Spain. "Travel outside the U.S. is essential for Twenty-first Century kids," said Joyce Kisner who led this independent travel adventure.

Katherine Seitz, Natalina Sents, Kara Exline and Kim Erwin were apprehensive about staying in a hostel dorm for ten people. "I thought we would stay with some really creepy people, but we stayed with some of the coolest people I have ever met," said Kara Exline.

The girls spent their first day in Spain dodging showers in the Parque del Buen Retiro, the Central Park of Madrid. When the rain hit, they were taking pictures under the colonnade. When the second shower hit, they were inside the Palacio de Cristal or Glass Palace. They watched the rain cascade down the roof and out the mouths of gargoyles until the wall behind them suddenly erupted into a waterfall.

The teenagers had done their homework. They knew that the art museums were free at the end of the day. At El Prado, one of Europe's two most prestigious museums, the girls learned to recognize El Greco's elongated bodies and dramatic use of light and dark. At the Reyna Sophia they experienced Guernica, Picasso's wall-sized statement on war.

On Saturday with not a cloud in the sky, they arrived at the Palacio Real with its large fountain and sculpture garden. With a little fast-talking, they got inside for the student price. Inside was an immense courtyard overlooking the valley. The palace furnishings were elegant and the walls of one small room were



Pictured left to right: Natalina Sents, Kara Exline, Kim Erwin, and Katherine Seitz

made completely of ceramic urns and vines. The armory housed a collection of weapons and armor belonging to European kings and their horses. The palace pharmacy contained everything necessary for mixing and preparing medicines from the shelves of dried herbs stored in labeled ceramic jars.

With a couple of days of price checking under their belts, the girls tackled the Sunday El Rastro flea market. Three hours of shopping later, they had discovered the need for really large second bags. They all fell in love with pantalonies, but Katherine Seitz earned the reputation of Queen of Pantalonies after buying four pairs.

In Toledo the girls cozied up to the statue of Cervantes, the

Shakespeare of Spain, in front of a dramatic keyhole arch. This walled city, famous for its Toledo steel swords, was an inexpensive day-trip from Madrid. Behind huge walls and surrounded on three sides by the Rio Tajo, Toledo was an opportunity to climb steep cobbled streets, experience the traditional Spanish style of a flowery courtyard surrounded by covered porticos and eat.

For most of the trip the group shopped in Dia supermarkets and prepared meals in hostel kitchens, but in Toledo they splurged on a menu del dia: 2 plates of choice, dessert, crusty bread and water or wine. With the group of five ordering a variety of dishes, they were able to try the whole menu: gazapacho, an ensalada with tuna, macaroni, roast chicken, beef

filet, fish, scalloped potatoes, ice cream, crème caramel, and rice pudding. On another day they had churros and chocolate, such a rich, thick pudding-like drink that even Mrs. Kisner couldn't finish a whole cup.

Now experienced travelers, the teens requested a challenge for the last day. Kim Erwin suggested a team competition like the Amazing Race with extra credit for asking people to take pictures with them. Of course, the prize was Milka chocolate bars, which Natalina Sents had recommended back in Amsterdam. It was a tie.

"It was great to watch the girls grow as travelers," said Mrs. Kisner.

## Veterans' Affairs News

Beginning later this summer there will be a Disabled American Veterans van assigned to the Muscatine and Louisa County Service Offices. The van will be available Monday through Friday to transport our counties Veterans to the VAMC in Iowa City for their scheduled appointments. **VOLUNTEER DRIVERS ARE NEEDED!!** If you would like to become a volunteer driver, please contact Andy at the VSO to discuss what is required. A CDL is not required, nor do you have to be a Veteran. We are also looking for a **DAV Van Coordinator** to assist our offices in setting up drivers, schedules and communicating with Veterans on their pickups. If you would be interested in such a position, and it is a volunteer position, please contact Andy.

Come one, come all Veterans to the second annual joint Louisa-Muscatine Veterans Benefits Fair to be held on July 28th! All honorably discharged Veterans and current guard and reserve service members from either county are encouraged to attend to learn about and apply for State and Federal Benefits and to meet the local Veterans Service Officers from our many American Legion and VFW Posts as well as the County Service Officers and some National Service Officers from Des Moines. We will have representatives from the VA Medical Center in Iowa City, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs and others present to answer questions and hand out information about their various programs. The event will be held at the L&M Elementary School cafeteria at 14506

170th St, Letts from 1-5 pm. Please plan to attend and feel free to contact Andy with any questions or ideas. If you cannot make it, feel free to send your spouse to gather information on what benefits are available!!

It's time again to volunteer for the VA's Annual National TEE Tournament. The event takes place September 12-15 and will include golf, bowling, bag toss, kayaking and horse-shoes. The golfing will take place at Riverside, West Liberty, Solon, North Liberty and Iowa City. Volunteers are needed for all aspects of this event including food, nursing, dog sitting, casino night and assisting the disabled vets during the events. If you are interested in more information, volunteering or participating in the events, please visit their website at <http://www.va.gov/opa/speceven/tee/index.asp> or contact Andy at the Veterans Service Office for a volunteer

packet.

The Louisa County Veterans Service Office (VSO) is located at the Louisa County Law Enforcement Complex north of town at 12365 County Road G56, Suite 104. Business hours are 9am-3pm Tuesday through Thursday, although those may vary considerably and Andy may not be in the office due to other commitments. **Setting up an appointment is recommended!!!** Please contact Andy at 319-527-6513 to set up an appointment or contact him by email at [louisavets@louisacomm.net](mailto:louisavets@louisacomm.net)

The Louisa County Veterans Commission holds open monthly meetings on the third Thursday of each month at 10 am at the Veterans Service Office. Please contact Andy if you have any issues that you feel the Commission needs to address.

## Briefly -

### Alzheimer's Association to meet

The Alzheimer's Association Henry County Support Group will meet on Thursday July 21<sup>st</sup> at 3:00 pm at the First Presbyterian Church in Winfield. The topic this month is Family Caregiving. For more information please call Peggy Beaty or Angie Ebeling at 319-257-3303.

### Talent Show at Crooked Creek Days

This year's Winfield Crooked Creek Days celebration will include a Bill Riley Talent Show on Saturday, August 6<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 a.m. in the high school gym. The contest is open for ages 2 years - 21 years with two divisions, Sprouts, ages 2 yrs. - 12 yrs. and Seniors, ages 13 yrs. 21 yrs. Due to a time restraint the number of entries will be limited, therefore acts will be included on a "first come, first served" basis. For more information and to register contact Sharon Jennings at 319-257-6632 or email [smjen@iowatelecom.net](mailto:smjen@iowatelecom.net). Following the talent show contestants may ride on the Bill Riley Talent Show float in the parade, which will begin at 10:30.

### Cruise Night on the Square

The Corn Country Cruisers from Washington, Iowa are conducting Cruise Nights On The Square, (Washington, Iowa) on July 9<sup>th</sup>, and Aug 13<sup>th</sup>. All dates are 5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. There will be a 50/50 Drawing at 8:00 p.m. please enter on southwest side of square/no entry fees. For additional information please contact Randy Farrington at 319-694-5603. The American Legion Post 29 will provide food.

### FFA Alumni Tractor Ride

The Columbus FFA Alumni will holding their 2nd annual tractor ride on Saturday, July 23, 2011. Registration forms and details can be picked up at the Columbus Junction State Bank, online at [www.hs.columbuscsd.com/FFA](http://www.hs.columbuscsd.com/FFA) under the "forms" link, or contact Brenda Wilson at 319-212-0529.

### Ice Cream Social at Kingston Church

Kingston United Methodist Church will hold an ice cream social on Sunday, July 17th from 5:00-7:00 pm. Music by Hiway 99 band. Handicapped accessible and air-conditioned. Serving maid rites, potato salad, baked beans, cakes, pies and beverages with HOMEMADE ICE CREAM. Free will donation.

### Fair Books Available

Sew It - Grow It - Show It! Is the theme for the Louisa County Fair July 24 - 30, 2011. Fair books can be picked up at Columbus Junction State Bank, Community Bank, Columbus Gazette, Agriland FS Inc., Special Effects, City Hall and the Library. Hope to see you at the fair.

### Lions Club Tractor Lunch

The Grandview-Letts Lions Club will be serving a luncheon for the 2011 River Junction Tractor Ride at the Letts Community Center on Saturday, July 9, 2011. Lunch will be served from 11:30-1:30 p.m. The cost to eat will be \$9.00 total. The menu includes loose meat sandwiches, baked beans, cole slaw, chips, cookies and bars, and assorted drinks. Come to Letts on Saturday, July 9<sup>th</sup> to view 150 new and vintage tractors, and to support your local Lions Club!

### This week at the Farmers' Market

Fridays from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the American Legion parking lot, now until October 14<sup>th</sup>. The market offers fresh produce, baked goods, homemade noodles, jams and jellies, and plants. Some vendors accept Iowa Farmers Market Nutrition, WIC and Senior Program coupons. Buy fresh and local and taste the difference. For more information, including how to participate as a vendor, contact Nitza or Mallory at 319-728-7971.

### Legion Auxiliary to meet

The American Legion Auxiliary will meet Tuesday, July 12th at 7:00 p.m. There will be installation of the new officers. Elizabeth Miller will be hostess

## Farmers' Market to host Youth Marketplace



Seven budding young entrepreneurs from Columbus Junction have spent the first part of their summer vacations in a fast-paced, scaled-down MBA program for youth. The community's newest businessman will unveil their products at the Farmers Market Friday, July 8. The market runs from 4:30 to 6:30 at the American Legion parking lot, 99 Second Street, Columbus Junction. Come see what the fact of Main Street might look like in fifteen years and be among the first to buy their products.

Summer Community Development Center intern Jesus Lizarraga volunteered to teach the business class for 6<sup>th</sup> graders called Youth Marketplace. The curriculum and oversight are provided by Iowa State Extension. Participants learn about product development, marketing and break even points, they even write their own business plans and get loans from LIFE Microlending to finance their operations. There are seven participants managing in four businesses; the names of the participants are Johnathan and Angelo Gonzalez, Cobi Cline and Ashley Sanchez, Daniel Fuentes and Ricardo Corrales, and Obrey Tribal. The class is made possible by the Horizons Program administered by Iowa State Extension.

Pictured above: Youth Marketplace participant Cobi Cline cashes his business loan check at Community Bank in Columbus Junction.