

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Seed Library Growing at Actual Library

APACHE JUNCTION – The need of a new and improved garden, tackling food insecurity and an Eagle Scout project has the Apache Junction Public Library set to offer free seeds for checkout to city residents with a library card.

On Sept. 7, the library joins a growing number of organizations nationwide intent on engaging and encouraging community members to keep their eyes to the stars and their hands in the dirt as they experience the joy and benefits of gardening.

“Our mission is to provide education, technology, information and entertainment to all members of our community. Making seeds available is another resource toward that goal,” said Pam Harrison, the director of the library.

Lifelong Apache Junction resident Lloyd Stenglein approached staff about starting the seed collection. Working toward Eagle Scout, the Boy Scouts’ highest rank, the 18-year-old recent graduate from Faith Christian School in Mesa collected funds and supplies, and furnished the display cabinet and first batch of seeds. Stenglein explained he wanted to give back to the library because it was a big part of his childhood — particularly the “amazing kids” area.

Harrison said she envisions the collection as a vital element of a community-wide partnership that supports gardeners of all levels, and provides needed resources toward Apache Junction residents’ path to greater sustainability.

“A backyard garden is the first defense against food insecurity and the instability of the food chain,” she added.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as the lack of access to adequate, nutritional food to sustain an active and healthy lifestyle for everyone in a household. Statistics posted on the Superstition Community Food Bank’s website show 1 in 7 seniors, 1 in 5 adults and 1 in 4 children in the surrounding area are food insecure. Myra Garcia, the organization’s executive director, reported the food bank distributes 35 to 45 pounds of food per month to around 40,000 people a year.

“Supply and need are cyclical,” Garcia said. “June was a good month for donations from local retailers, and we distributed 80 pounds of food a person.” Garcia added volunteers are needed to assist in distribution.

Growing your own food enhances general well-being. Studies show gardening reduces stress and improves mental clarity. A recent report from the National Library of Medicine found overwhelming evidence that gardening is beneficial for mental and physical health.

“In a study about gardening published in the Mental Health Review Journal, it was found that gardening has been linked to being beneficial to one’s emotional, social, vocational, physical, and spiritual well-being,” said Dr. Arthur Chou, Chief Medical Officer at Horizon Health and Wellness.

Dr. Chou agrees that gardening can have many therapeutic benefits, especially when paired with strategies such as therapy, medication, and other treatments that lead to mental wellbeing. Horizon Health and Wellness delivers both mental health and medical services. To speak to someone at Horizon, call (833) 431-4449.

Earth Heart Park’s community raised garden beds are getting a new look, new plans for year-round plantings, and a new Master Gardener, Lavier Kurtz, to manage them. Volunteers are welcome to join Kurtz on Thursdays from 6-8 p.m. and Saturdays from 7-9 a.m. For more information, contact Kurtz at Info@Lavgar.com or Cheri DeBree at Horizon, at Cheri.DeBree@HHWaz.org.

Though still in the firm grasp of summer, September is the perfect month to start vegetable seeds for a winter garden. Find the complete list of available seeds from beans to squash on the library’s website. Checked out your seeds, but don’t know where to start? Browse the gardening section for an array of helpful books — including those specific to the fickle nature of the Sonoran desert.

The library also expects to host experts in their field for presentations about gardening, health and nutrition, and will offer STEM and SciStarter’s Citizen Science projects for all ages. While you wait for your seeds to sprout, watch the monthly virtual cooking program “Interlibrary Kitchen” on Facebook and Instagram. Staff members, Leah Martin from Apache Junction Public Library and Megan Carbiener of Coolidge Public Library dish up recipes and laughs in equal measure.

Apache Junction Public Library is located at 1177 N. Idaho Ave. in Apache Junction. Information about the seed project and upcoming programs is available on the library’s website ajpl.org and Facebook and Instagram, or call (480) 474-8555.

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Nestled at the foot of the Superstition Mountains, Apache Junction is strategically positioned as the eastern gateway into the Greater Phoenix metro area (Valley of the Sun) and the western entry to the Tonto National Forest’s recreation venues. The surrounding geography and western atmosphere draw more than half a million visitors through the city annually. From the mysterious stories of hidden treasures to the people who follow them, Apache Junction is surrounded by legends.

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