

Horticulture program receives donation

MOUNT VERNON — The Knox County Career Center Board of Education on Tuesday accepted a substantial donation from the Knox County Sheriff's Office in the form of equipment and materials to the horticulture program. The items were seized by the Knox County Sheriff's Office/METRICH Enforcement Unit and are part of its "Weed and Seed" strategy in Knox County.

Weed and Seed is a philosophy the KCSO uses in regard to indoor marijuana grows, drug houses and clandestine meth labs, Sheriff David Barber said. The weed part of the strategy, he explained, is to weed out the problem, as evidenced by the closing of five major growing operations last year. The seeding part of the concept is to do something positive as a result. For instance, with mandatory drug fines and asset seizure and sale, a portion of that money goes toward the DARE program.

"Out of those five indoor grows," Barber said, "the department had a ton of paraphernalia. The detectives came up with the idea of contacting [horticulture instructor] Craig [Campbell]. Besides not having to worry about what the tubing, fertilizer and halogen lights will be used for, we thought this would be the perfect opportunity to employ the Weed and Seed strategy to see something positive happen. What better gift could we give to the future of the county, the kids?"

Campbell said he is very pleased with the largesse, which is estimated to equal about \$28,000 worth of materials. He said the items included about 30 grow lights, 300 one-gallon pots, plant food and additives.

"The fertilizers are top-quality products that we probably would never buy here because of budget constraints," he said. "You will see the results in more productive and brighter blooms in the petunias which surround the driveways and in the Children's Garden.

"The three complete hydroponics systems we received will probably be of the most use to us," Campbell said. "We got pumps, grow lights, pots, tubing, growing medium, meters and every possible nutrient and additive that you could ever need."

Campbell said the career center can only use some of the grow lights, so, with the sheriff's permission, he will be contacting other career centers in the state to share the grow lights with them.

Janet Hawk of Danville and Bill Blaschke of Windy Hill Nursery have volunteered to help get the hydroponics system up and running. Campbell plans to install the system in one of the greenhouses on the campus, and hopes to grow tomatoes and cucumbers for use in the cafeteria, generating a source of fresh vegetables all winter long.

Regarding personnel, the board advanced Vicki Clark and Elaine Robinson on the salary schedule due to completion of the necessary requirements. Caleb Ryan, an auto technology student, was hired as a summer maintenance worker. Lynn Porman was hired as a science instructor and Cindy Strauser as a teacher aide for the 2009-10 school year.

The board also made adjustments to nursing program contracts, added to the adult course offerings and instructor lists, and hired Adult Basic & Literacy program personnel, to be paid through ABLE grant money.

Besides approving routine monthly and annual fiscal year financial actions, the board approved property, fleet and liability insurance through the Ohio School Plan. It also approved a memorandum of understanding for the locally funded initiatives portion of the building project. Those include heating and cooling, electrical, technology, windows and door hardware for the board offices and preschool.

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