



**NEWS RELEASE
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Community Effort Lands Edwardsville as First 'Pollinator Pathway' City in Illinois

EDWARDSVILLE, Ill. – Thanks to the efforts of multiple organizations and residents, Edwardsville has become Illinois' first official Pollinator Pathway city. Mayor Art Risavy will read a proclamation at the Tuesday, June 20, City Council meeting to recognize the achievement and to share ideas for everyone who wants to help this budding cause to continue to take root.

The designation comes from the nonprofit Pollinator Pathway group, which supports and promotes efforts to establish continuous areas of pollinator-friendly habitat and food sources for bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other pollinating wildlife. Illinois is now the 15th state with at least one designated Pollinator Pathway city.

"This is a wonderful accomplishment," Risavy said. "I appreciate the work of all involved to make this possible."

Mary Grose, who was involved in the effort and is a founding member of the Good Dirt Community Garden, said that Edwardsville had qualified to be designated as a Pollinator Pathway city through ongoing projects; all that remained was submitting forms and descriptions of the various groups' native gardens and prairies.

In addition to Good Dirt Community Garden, which is based at the Edwardsville YMCA Meyer Center, other organizations that contributed to the effort include the City's Beautification and Tree Commission; the Edwardsville Children's Museum; the Nature Preserve Foundation and Watershed Nature Center; the Center for Spirituality and Sustainability at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville; HeartLands Conservancy; Dunlap Lake Property Owners Association; Liberty Middle School, which is part of the Edwardsville School District; the 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House; and Madison County Transit.

"There were all these organizations that were doing similar things in their own little bubbles," said Sarah Cundiff, the chair of the City's Beautification & Tree Commission. "This was a way we could link these bubbles together, share resources and knowledge and work together for the greater good."

The project involves more than just nonprofit or governmental groups. Residents and businesses also can participate and submit their pollinator-friendly gardens and areas to be listed on the Pollinator Pathway map, Grose said.

The Pollinator Pathway project aims to address the declining population of pollinators, such as native bees and monarch butterflies, which the organization notes is largely due to loss of habitat and pesticide use. One of the easiest ways to help is to use native plants in flower beds and gardens. "Native plants' value lies in the fact that they are adapted to the local climate and soil conditions where they naturally occur," Grose said. Other tips include providing a clean water source -- a bird bath or fountain, for instance; leaving plant stalks, leaves and pieces of dead wood on your property in the colder months to provide food and habitat for wildlife; mowing less often and reducing or eliminating the use of pesticides.

To learn more about the Pollinator Pathway project and participating sites in Edwardsville, visit www.pollinator-pathway.org/towns/edwardsville. A link also will be available on the Beautification and Tree Commission's page on the City's website: www.cityofedwardsville.com/274/Beautification-Tree-Commission.

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