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McChord Airmen clean up local school's garden

Airman 1st Class Leah Young/62nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

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SEATTLE — Nine McChord Field Airmen rolled up their sleeves and strapped on their work boots as they spent a Saturday morning cleaning and restoring a garden at Madrona School Nov. 5.

Madrona School, part of the Seattle Public School system, is a facility that educates students from kindergarten through eighth grade. The school houses a learning garden that was overgrown and ineffectual.

“Previously, the flower beds were much larger and didn’t allow children the freedom to move around and explore,” said Farah Thaxton, Madrona School principal. “In addition, the garden was so overgrown that it was hard to figure out what was there.”

The Airmen worked for five hours to eliminate all weeds in the garden and cut down a tree to allow space for new plants. They built wooden flower boxes, planted new shrubbery and sprinkled mulch which created a path for children to easily venture through the garden.

“It looks like a completely different garden,” Thaxton said. “Our students will be so excited about it.”

The garden is used by more than 100 students over the course of a school year. Activities such as the after-school gardening club, preschool planting program and science classes keep the garden a busy place.

“Not only do we teach students how to garden, but they learn how to sustain a garden in an urban environment,” Thaxton said. “We teach them how to plant, grow and then cook their own food.”

As the coordinator and representative for the school project, Staff Sgt. Steven Seibert, 627th Civil Engineer Squadron, stressed the importance of giving back to the community.

“As a military member, often times we receive a lot of appreciation,” Seibert said. “Giving back to our local community is a high priority. Stepping further beyond our local area, to a place like Seattle, is meaningful because they don’t interact with us as often.”

“It feels good to know that a couple hours of work will give these kids a whole new place to learn,” said Senior Airman Michael Calderon, 8th Airlift Squadron loadmaster. “Hopefully we’ll be able to come back soon and continue to help out.”

Thaxton said Madrona School has multiple upcoming projects including painting the interior hallways and library. Nine out of nine volunteers agree; McChord Field will be happy to provide assistance in the future.



Airman 1st Class Leah Young

Nine McChord Field Airmen rake, weed and re-plant Madrona School's learning garden Nov. 5, in Seattle. The Airmen eliminated all weeds in the garden and cut down a tree to allow space for new plants.

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