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Riverbender.com Community Center Rooftop Gardening After School Camp offers Early Bird Registration

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
May 2 2018 10:00 AM



ALTON - The Riverbender.com Community Center Rooftop Gardening After School Camp has an Early Bird Registration underway with a start date of May 8.

Early bird registration is only \$25 and the rooftop gardening after school camp runs May 8-May 24, every Tuesday and Thursday during that three-week period. The program is again sponsored this year by The Plant Stand.

The camp will give children access to all the fun and games at the community center plus an amazing rooftop gardening and outdoor art experience. The unique opportunity is being facilitated by Sherry Droste, a retired Alton educator, and U of I Extension Master Gardener, and Trevor Counts, N.D., garden center manager at Home Depot in Alton.

Activities include raised bed gardening, tower gardening, worm farming, leaf rubbings, solar printing, river rock marker painting, and more. The program is geared for middle school students. Free transportation is available from school and kids can stay as late as 6 p.m. Free transportation is available from Alton Middle School Bus #19, Alton High School Bus #22 and St. Mary's Middle School Bus #2.

Each participant will receive a free plant and achievement certificate. On June 1, parents will be invited to a Rooftop party to show off the campers' hard work.

Droste said she started talking with John Hentrich, CEO of Riverbender.com and the Community Center, a couple years ago and at the time was not aware of the rooftop garden.



“I told him when I retired it was such a great concept and that I wanted to be involved in the programming” she said. “It is a good way to get kids engaged on how to grow things, where they come from and how to take care of it. They will have an actual connection to something great and such a great venue. The rooftop has an incredible view and it's so peaceful up there.”

Droste continued: “I am working with Trevor Counts the lawn and garden manager at Home Depot, and I think between the two of us and our fields, we have a lot to offer. I grew up gardening with my parents who were organic gardeners. Gardening is fun and it is a good way to promote not just learning about plants, but good nutrition and health wellness.”

“Gardening has become a lost art, some don’t realize that even sweet peas are beautiful; I have those in front of my house. The first class is on composing and its importance to the environment. I hope children glean an interest in plants and agriculture even if it is small-scale agriculture and some brief knowledge of where their food comes from. It will be educational for the kids.”

Space is limited, so contact (618) 465-9850 ext. 212, to register or register online at RiverbenderCommunityCenter.org/GardenCamp.

