PENN STATE LIVE

The Arboretum at Penn State to build Children's Garden

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UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. -- Thanks to two leadership gifts totaling $4 million, The Arboretum at Penn State will create and grow the Children’s Garden, an interactive place for children to learn and to explore the natural world. A gift from Edward R. and Helen S. Hintz will fund the construction of the space, and a gift from Charles H. “Skip” Smith will create an endowment to maintain the garden and develop its educational programs. A previously announced gift from Marcia Day in 2008 will provide endowment support for children’s education programs.

“The Children’s Garden will play a key role in the mission of the Arboretum, and I think it will become one of the most popular features in the H. O. Smith Botanic Gardens,” said Kim Steiner, director of the Arboretum and professor of forest biology in the College of Agricultural Sciences. “The Children’s Garden will help us to foster an appreciation for nature through experiences that may spark a deep and lasting interest in plants and their environment. This aspect of the Arboretum has been a priority from the very beginning, and we are truly thankful that Skip, Helen and Ed have made it come to life.”

Located adjacent to the Kathryn Bower Smith Strolling Garden near the Hosler Oak, the Children’s Garden was a part of the 1999 master plan for the Arboretum, which opened in 2009. The Children’s Garden will be a place for families and children to interact and discover the natural world in an educational environment. While appealing to parents, students, and people of all ages, the garden will be designed for those between the ages of 3 and 12.

“Ed and I have a special interest in children and families. We were inspired by the creativity of the early plans for this special garden and the opportunities it will provide young families to enjoy the outdoors together and learn about nature in a fun, hands-on setting,” Helen Hintz said. “We also envision many elementary school children taking field trips here to learn about the environment and the preservation of our natural resources.”

“When I heard about the plans to construct the Children’s Garden, I was excited for the ways it would engage the next generation of nature lovers and draw a whole new population of visitors to the Arboretum,” Smith said. “I am proud to partner with Ed and Helen Hintz, two great Penn Staters, in making this dream a reality.”

The preliminary plan for the Children’s Garden recreates an aspect of the central Pennsylvania environment.
-- With a name evoking memories of Penn State’s alma mater, the Childhood’s Gate Entryway will be located directly off the walkway through the Strolling Garden which surrounds the Event Lawn. Here, visitors will be greeted with rocks and wind-activated instruments demonstrating the forces of nature.

-- The Central Valley will celebrate Native American history in the Centre Region. A lawn will serve as an activity area, and a glass house will provide space for instruction during winter months.

-- The Grotto will demonstrate the local geological formations and the movement of water in the region.

-- Fossil Ridge will introduce visitors to the ancient topography of central Pennsylvania. Children will interact with these formations by climbing safe rock walls and hunting for fossils.

-- Mushroom Hollow will provide families places to sit and relax. A giant tree stump will allow children to discover insects, decayed wood, and other natural processes.

-- To see an artist's rendering of the Children's Garden, and to view plans, visit http://live.psu.edu/flickrset/72157628793101667.

Detailed design of the Children’s Garden can now begin. It is anticipated that up to 15 smaller “gardens within the Children’s Garden” will be designed, representing numerous gift recognition opportunities for other donors wishing to honor or celebrate someone.

“We hope that the Children’s Garden will be a place for children and adults to enjoy themselves in an interesting and educational environment,” Steiner said. “Everyone experiences moments that create lasting impressions and passions. In the Children’s Garden, we hope to create a space in which experiences like this are common.”

Named for Smith’s late father, the H.O. Smith Botanic Gardens in The Arboretum at Penn State was constructed in 2009 thanks to Skip’s lead gift. Occupying nearly 400 acres between Park Avenue and the Mount Nittany Expressway on the University Park campus, the Arboretum is open to the public. A significant portion of installation of the Children’s Garden in the Arboretum will be substantially completed by late fall 2012.

Skip Smith graduated from Penn State with a B.S. in electrical engineering in 1948. Along with his brothers and fellow Penn State graduates James B. Smith and Thomas L. Smith, Skip (Charles H.) joined his father in the firm H.O. Smith and Sons, a real estate development and rental company established in 1951. Skip was also the founder, in 1950, of State College Television Co., now State College Audio-Visual Supply, owned by his son John.

Ed, a 1959 Smeal College graduate, and Helen Hintz, a 1960 graduate of the College of Health and Human Development, have created numerous student and faculty endowments across the University and made the lead gift to create the Hintz Family Alumni Center. Ed served as chair of the Board of Trustees from 2001-04 and chair of the Grand Destiny campaign from 1996-
2001. Helen was named Penn State’s Fundraising Volunteer of the Year in 2006 for her service through Penn State’s first two campaigns and the Investing in People initiative, and she is now the chair of the College of Health and Human Development’s For the Future campaign committee.

To learn more about the future development plans for The Arboretum at Penn State and Children’s Garden, contact Patrick Williams at 814-865-0441 or visit the Arboretum online at www.arboretum.psu.edu.