LPMGA General Meeting
Wednesday August 2, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 pm. Mary Gladney led the Pledge of Allegiance

Bootsie Durand introduced Sara Shields, the Louisiana Master Gardener (LMG) State Coordinator. Sara has been the State Coordinator since 2016.

Sara gave a detailed overview of the Master Gardener program and history, and then touched on multiple MG submitted questions.

- Louisiana was the last state to implement the MG program. The MG pilot program began in Louisiana in East Baton Rouge parish in 1994 with 34 volunteers, and will have its 30th anniversary next year. The program was statewide by 1998. By 2007 there were 941 active MGs in the state. In 2016 the first Advanced Master Gardeners class graduated. As of 2022 over 6,500 MGs have been trained across the state, with around 2,000 members who have remained active.
  The program is averaging between 300-350 new volunteers each year (counting 2020 and 2021).
- The nationally recognized economic value of one volunteer hour is $29. Louisiana MGs recorded almost 76,000 hours in 2022, for an economic impact of over 2 million. MGs volunteer hours last year equaled out to 43 additional full-time employees for the AgCenter.
- A new horizontal logo is being worked on for LMG.
- The Lafayette MG group is the only MG group that has a connection to an outside university. Most larger groups' demo beds are at LSU AgCenter research stations. The current MOU arrangement for our demo bed at Ira Nelson has four years left and there is no need to worry about having to relocate currently.
- School Gardens
  - Sara refers other groups to LPMGA for advice because our program works so well.
  - The number one problem she's seen with other groups is growing the program too big too fast, instead of growing slowly and only accepting the amount of schools that can be maintained.
  - Sara has been assigned as the new Junior MG contact for the state.
  - To help with recruiting new SGI members Sara suggests school gardens being mentioned to the class as a way to get involved.
  - She mentioned that other parishes have a class project as part of the class curriculum.
  - She also stressed the importance that volunteers shouldn't be forced into participating in activities they have no interest in.
- Clarification on the 'new' status titles:
  - A person in the coursework phase of the training program is a *LMG Trainee or Intern*.
  - A person who has successfully completed the coursework but has not yet completed their 40 hours for certification is an *Apprentice LMG*.
  - An apprentice who successfully completes the volunteer service requirements (40 volunteer hours) in the allotted time (one year) is a *Certified LMG*.
  - A LMG that meets the annual requirements for recertification (Records 20 volunteer hours and 6 continuing education hours, pays dues, and turns in Code of Conduct) is an *Active Certified LMG, in Good Standing*.
  - A LMG that does not meet the annual requirements for recertification is an *Active Certified LMG, Not in Good Standing*. You are still covered under MG insurance at MG events, but can remedy this status at the end of the year. (This means turning in a signed Code of Conduct, paying yearly dues and recording at least the minimum required 20 volunteer and 6 continuing education hours for recertification.)
  - A previously certified LMG who fails to meet the annual requirements for recertification for two consecutive years is an *Inactive LMG*. Your status is changed to Inactive in the LPMGA Roster and online recording system, but not deleted.
  - You can fill out a Leave of Absence form that can be submitted to freeze your status.
  - There is no state time limit on Inactive status. LMPGA can decide to implement a time limit if wanted. Generally, if Inactive more than three years returning MGs are required to audit the class at a reduced rate.

- MG groups can enact more restrictive guidelines, but rules cannot be less lenient than those at the state level.
- Saturday MGIT classes have been offered before, but do not tend to work out well because the members who tend to have Saturday only restrictions tend to not be able to work out long term.
  All MG classes across the state are split between Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Some offer afternoon, or evening classes. Historically retention rates on evening and Saturday classes is very low.
- Background checks are currently focused on the new classes. Most MGs certified prior to the 2022 class will not be background checked, however it is mandatory to be background checked if you work with children (School Garden Initiative, 4H) and/or are handling money (plant sales, Treasurer, etc…)
  If you are participating in an activity that requires a background check it takes between 4-6 weeks. Your information is kept private other than Pass/Fail status.
  Sara Shields is in charge of keeping track of background check statuses.
  Background checks are NOT a requirement for Active Status, but it will be if you are coming back from Inactive status.
- Dues: Not all programs have dues. About half of the 30 MG programs are associations and every association has a dues requirement for active status. Dues run from $10-30 across the different associations.

If you have any questions or concerns contact Maddox Miller.
You can reach Sara at lmgcoordinator@agcenter.lsu.edu

Maddox Miller invited the two newest members of the AgCenter office to introduce themselves. Victoria Landry is the new assistant extension Family Consumer Science agent. She is a registered dietician who words with FNet and Flavors of Health. Lanie Richard is the new Country Agent for Agriculture.

Mary encouraged the membership to sell books of raffle tickets for Plant Fest. Gail Wakefield is selling t-shirts, note cards, and aprons. Mary announced that a new budget will be presented to the membership soon, and stressed the importance of helping with Plant Fest as our biggest fundraiser to help us be able to meet our financial obligations this year. LJ Delcambre and Jim Russo are the Chairs of Plant Fest this year. If you know of a place where we can put up posters to advertise, please contact the Chairs.

The Finance Committee (Mary Gladney, Bootsie Durand, Yvonne Lanoux, and John Hebert) will be sending out a revised budget accounting for our latest income reports to be voted on in September.

Meagan Stogsdill advised the membership that forms for active status in the 2024 year will be posted soon on the website and in the members only Facebook group. Copies will also be available at the September, October, and November general meetings. She suggested joining the Facebook group if you have not already because there are frequent posts of events and articles for continuing education, and the group lets members connect and share photos. All membership emails, newsletters, many forms, and voting links are reposted in the group as well for convenience.

The updated Roster will be released at the end of August and will include the 2023 class members. If anyone has any changes to their information, please contact Meagan ASAP to update. She asked for anyone interested in serving on the 2024 Board or on the 2024 Nominating Committee to please contact her (lmgmeagan@gmail.com). The positions to be voted on this year are Vice President, Treasurer, Volunteer Coordinator, and Member at Large.

Maddox Miller congratulated Paul Manuel and Mary Ann Armbruster, along with their helpers, on their hard work preparing for the 2023 class. The class started with 60 applicants, and there are 33 members. He also congratulated Bootsie Durand all everyone who helped with Dans Le Jardin for an excellent job.

Maddox expressed appreciation to Ed Wilhelm for judging the Vermillion 4H garden contest, and all his hard work with the Vermillion parish school gardens.

Maddox assured the group that there is nothing to currently worry about regarding the LPMGA group possibly leaving Ira Nelson. He also encouraged the group to engage with our pages on social media.

Bootsie Durand announced there will be another Dans Le Jardin, but it will take place in Fall 2024. She needs suggestions for a large, but inexpensive, location for an estimated 200 people.

Melissa Dardar asked for more volunteers for School Gardens. Eleven schools have applied this year, but they do not currently have enough volunteers for them all. The program needs at least three MGs per school. Charles Hebert has made Power Point lessons, and there is a Junior Master Gardener book to teach from – lessons just need to modified by grade level. The volunteers meet with Charles Hebert on the first Wednesday of the month to see what lesson will be taught. Around the third Wednesday is when you will go to the school. Different schools do different days, and it isn't always the same day. If interested please fill out the SGI survey that was sent out via email. If the survey has been lost it can still be accessed in the members only LPMGA Facebook group. You do need to be finger printed by the Lafayette Parish School Board to participate so those interested need to contact Melissa Dardar or Charles Hebert as soon as possible.

Announcements:
Board Meeting – August 15th 1pm Ira Nelson
General Meeting – September 6th Main Library. Speaker will be Maddox Miller on Tropical Plants

Louann made a motion to adjourn. Meagan seconded. Meeting adjourned at 1:22pm.

Minutes submitted by Meagan Stogsdill