



A Message from the Board President

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Kalamazoo in Bloom (KIB) has had an exciting three months since **Monika Trahe** came on board as our Executive Director in July. **Marilyn Clear** retired as director after many years of wearing several hats at KIB.

Monika has been working hard to update our systems and her organizational skills have guided us in new directions. After the *Tomato Taste-off* held in August with **MSU Extension Master Gardeners** and the **Kalamazoo Garden Council**, our efforts were directed to our first fundraiser, *The Great Pumpkin Soiree*. This successful event was held at the **Kalamazoo Institute of Arts** and had eight chefs compete in serving wonderful food made from pumpkins. This was a real treat for the guests who tasted and chose the winner, a cream puff made by **Bravo**. Special thanks to all participants and donors, especially **Gene the Pumpkin Man**.

Our next challenge was decorating the peacock for the **Holiday Parade**. **Western Michigan University** lent us their peacock, which we named **Molly**, as our peacock in **Bronson Park** is named **Mike**. We decorated the peacock with greens and flowers, and we were excited to be chosen as one of the ten floats that viewers could vote on for a \$150.00 prize.

We have ordered the flowers for Bronson Park, the **Court House**, **City Hall**, the **Transportation Station**, **Nazareth**, and **Crane Park**. We reviewed pictures of the beds and the adopters' evaluation of their bed. There were many positive comments and helpful suggestions. We are thrilled that **River Street Flowerland** is willing to plant the corner beds across from the library again. We appreciate their generosity and welcome any other greenhouse that is interested in featuring their new plants.

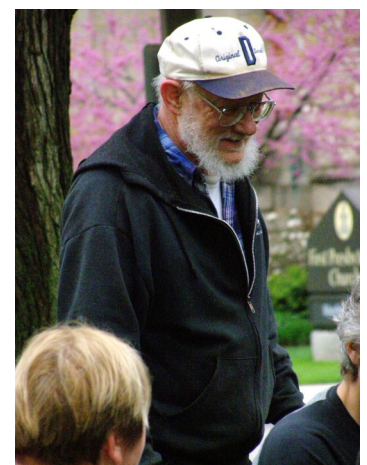
Monika and I plan to spend the next three months visiting businesses and organizations to recruit new volunteers for planting days in May, as well as bed adopters and sponsors. We are also looking for teams to care for beds in Portage at **Library Lane**. To schedule a visit from KIB call (269) 381-2977 ext. 3320.

Lastly, we say farewell to our longtime gardener, **Don Weaver**, who recently retired. We sincerely thank him for his many years of service. We will be looking for another dedicated gardener this spring. Hope to see you all at Planting Days, if not sooner!

- Mary VanTassel

Mark your calendars

- TBA early Spring Volunteer Orientation
- Friday, May 18 Planting day in Portage
- Thursday, May 24 Planting day in Bronson Park



Retiring KIB Gardener, Don Weaver

It was the Great Pumpkin Soiree

We honored the great gourds of fall - pumpkins - with a fundraiser on November 2 at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts. **The Great Pumpkin Soiree** challenged food establishments to create pumpkin dishes that guests judged based on taste, creativity and presentation. **Charlie Brown**, a pumpkin farmer in South Haven, chose the overall winner. **We'd like to thank all those that participated** - Asiago's Bakery & Deli, Bravo, Confections with Convictions, Full City Café, Gull Lake Country Club, Kalamazoo Country Club, Olde Peninsula, and Sodexo. The food was delicious!

In addition to the food tasting, we had a silent auction that helped raise the total proceeds of the night to over \$4,200. **We'd like to thank our sponsors and contributors for all of their support** - Extreme Power Equipment, IHS Distributing, Gordon Water, Martin & Associates Environmental, The Ample Pantry, The Beacon Club, Bold, Bravo, The Cheese Lady, Discover Kalamazoo, Forever Framing, The Gilmore, Harding's, Heilman's Nuts & Confections, I've Got Your Purse, Kalamazoo Civic Theatre, Kalamazoo Cooks, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo Nature Center, Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, Millennium Restaurant Group, Photo Impact Photography, Sweetwater's, and Tiffany's Wine & Spirit Shoppe. A special thanks to **Gene Rhodes**, better known as Gene the Pumpkin Man, for his support of the event from the beginning and contributions of pumpkins and cookbooks.

We look forward to next year's event!



Katie Wittenberg of Bravo took home both People's Choice award and the Pumpkin Trophy with her puff pastry filled with pumpkin mouse, and a maple glaze with bacon pieces on top. (Photo courtesy of Mia Geer of Photo Impact Photography)

Was that a peacock I saw?

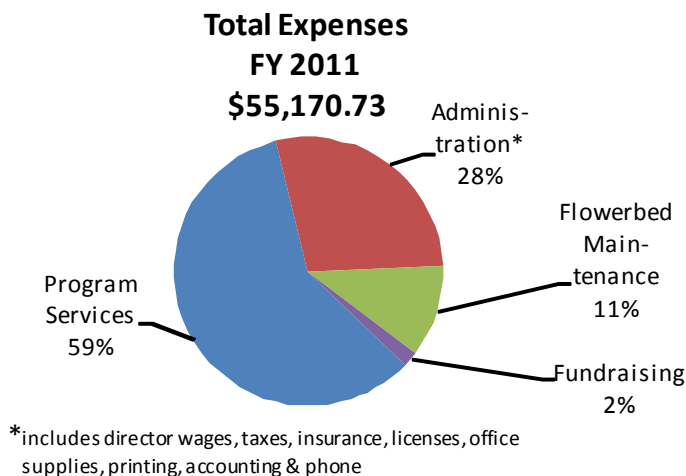
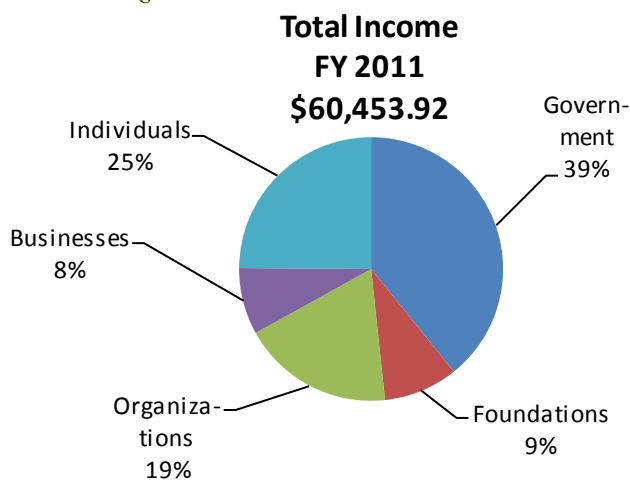
The peacock was the theme of Kalamazoo in Bloom's float for the Holiday Parade this year. We extend special thanks to **WMU Landscape Services** for allowing us to use the peacock they display in front of **Miller Auditorium**, and to



Mary VanTassel and Monika Trabe

of **Larsen and Associates Inc.** for hauling the peacock on their trailer. We had so much fun and even better, Kalamazoo in Bloom was selected as one of ten floats (out of 90 entries) the community could vote as best float. Even though we didn't win, we are so grateful for being recognized!

Kalamazoo in Bloom Year-end Financials (10/1/2010 - 9/30/2011)



Kalamazoo in Bloom received generous support from the City of Kalamazoo, City of Portage, Irving S. Gilmore Foundation, John E. Fetzer Institute Fund of the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, and the Kalamazoo Valley Plant Growers Cooperative.

In loving memory of Mike

In the early 1980's, an egg hatched in **Bronson Park**. It was an idea of **Gale Arent, MSU Extension** Agent, after travels in Europe. With dimensions in hand, Gale approached a Kalamazoo metal works firm to construct the two part frame. Gale's right hand man from the peacock's inception in the early 80's to 2010 was **Mike Blakely**, Master Gardener.

Mike was primarily known for his vegetable gardening which he had done since childhood. He was a cherished and loving friend to all **Master Gardeners**. In 1986, he approached **Humphrey Products** about using garden space which had been provided to employees for use in growing vegetables for the needy. With permission granted, the project was adopted by Mike and the Kalamazoo Master Gardeners with approximately 18 to 22 thousand pounds of vegetables donated per year to the **Food Bank of South Central Michigan**.

Tasty Tomatoes Featured

The delicious harvest of the gardening season was the focus for celebration at the 3rd annual *Tomato Taste-off* in August.

Everyone was invited to attend this free event and choose their favorite

tomatoes from a selection provided by both home and community gardeners. Four categories of tomatoes were judged: small tomatoes (cherry or grape), paste (roma), heirlooms, and slicer tomatoes. Fresh tomatillos were also available for tasting.

The winners in each of the four categories were:

Cherry Tomato:

- 1st - Terry Kott for variety: Anna Aasa
- 2nd - Jeff Fleming for variety: Chocolate Pear
- 3rd - Linda Whitlock for variety: Sun Sugar

Roma or Paste Tomato:

- 1st - Diana Schneider for variety: Juliette
- 2nd (a tie) - Jeff Fleming for variety: Amish Paste & Bob Poel for variety: Juliette
- 3rd - David Fening for variety: Crandarero

Heirlooms:

- 1st - Jeff Fleming for variety: Black Krim
- 2nd - Jeff Fleming for variety: Lemmony
- 3rd - Jeff Fleming for variety: Mayo's Delight



With the advent of **Flowerfest** in the 80's (later renamed Kalamazoo In Bloom), Mike cultivated an interest in flowers, with his biggest achievement being the oversight of construction, planting and maintenance of the peacock in Bronson Park. Originally the peacock stood from May to September on the west side of Bronson Park, where the band shell is located. With construction of the band shell, the peacock was moved to the south side of the Park. Mike's name became synonymous with the peacock as he was there each spring to oversee its construction, planting over 27 flats of begonias in the body with many additional flats creating its colorful tail. You would often find him throughout the summer replacing or "dead heading" flowers to maintain its elegance and focal point in the park.

Sadly, Mike passed away at the age of 90 in January 2011. In remembrance of Mike and his work for Kalamazoo In Bloom, the peacock will be officially named "Mike" in his honor next year.

- Diana Schneider

Slicer Tomato:

- 1st - Barb Chaddock for variety: Yellow Slicer
- 2nd - Gail William for variety: Yellow Jubilee
- 3rd - Barb Chaddock for variety: Big Mama

Bobbe Luce, Executive Director of **ONEplace** at the **Kalamazoo Public Library** demonstrated how she makes fresh basil pesto. Everyone was welcomed to sample the pesto made with basil purchased that morning at the **Kalamazoo Farmer's Market**.

Jeff Fleming, winner of the several prizes in the taste-off, also provided instruction on how to save tomato seeds that can be grown in next year's garden. **Loaves & Fishes** was on hand to give information about sharing the harvest with other members of our community. **MSU Extension** shared information on preserving the harvest (drying, freezing, canning, root cellars and dehydrating). Advanced Master Gardeners, **JC Schneider** and **Bob Poel** answered vegetable gardening questions at the "Ask the Expert" booth; they actively garden at the Master Gardener Vegetable Garden which grows food to donate to the **Food Bank of South Central Michigan** annually. Bob also shared his personal collection of antique gardening tools. The young-at-heart were able to create tie-dyed t-shirts courtesy of **Kalamazoo in Bloom**.

This event is co-sponsored by Kalamazoo in Bloom, **Kalamazoo Master Gardener Program/MSU Extension**, and the **Kalamazoo Garden Council**. Additional thanks go to **Harding's** for donating a gift card and the **Kalamazoo Plant Growers Cooperative** for providing chrysanthemums for door prizes.

- Linda Whitlock



Kalamazoo In Bloom

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Say, what's new?

Exciting updates were made recently to help Kalamazoo in Bloom strengthen its internal capacity and extend its reach to more people.

With a capacity building grant from the **Kalamazoo Community Foundation**, Kalamazoo in Bloom was able to purchase a donor database and update its website making it more informative and interactive.

We encourage you to visit our new website and sign up to receive our e-news.

Additionally, you can find Kalamazoo in Bloom on Facebook and YouTube.

♣ Stay informed and sign up for [e-news](http://www.kalamazooinbloom.org) at www.kalamazooinbloom.org

♣ “Like” Kalamazoo in Bloom’s [Facebook](#) page

♣ [Give a gift](#) in honor or memory of a loved one

We’re pleased to share all of our latest additions with you, and to keep you informed of our news and events.

For additional information, please contact Monika Trahe, Executive Director, at director@kalamazooinbloom.org.

The mission of Kalamazoo in Bloom is to enhance the beauty of Kalamazoo County and to encourage community pride by planting and maintaining flowerbeds and supporting activities that celebrate the history and traditions of the area’s plant industries.

A land of beauty and awe

When **Kalamazoo County Flowerfest** began entering **Kalamazoo County** in the national **America in Bloom** contest, the **Kalamazoo Garden Council** initiated an *Attractive Garden Award* which emphasized the floral aspects of Kalamazoo. Nominated gardens were judged by various garden clubs that were members of the Garden Council. Winners of the Attractive Garden Award were presented in brief articles and pictured in the **Kalamazoo Gazette**.

After Kalamazoo County was recognized for several years by America in Bloom, this prompted Kalamazoo County Flowerfest to change its name to **Kalamazoo in Bloom**. At this time, too, the Garden Council encouraged better attention to landscapes and joined with Kalamazoo in Bloom to select Kalamazoo County homes or businesses whose front yard gardens and landscapes inspired neighborhoods to improve their overall appearance. Recipients of the new *Inspiring Garden Award* are chosen by a committee of garden club members and an award sign is placed in the recipient’s yard.

Winners of the Inspiring Garden Award in 2010 were **St. Augustine Cathedral** and **Gagie School**. The 2011 recipient, **Jack and Marilyn Gayda**, were featured on



2011 Inspiring Gardens winner, Marilyn Gayda (left) with KIB Board members, Mary VanTassel and Donna Schumann

the **Landscapers Garden Club’s** biennial walk. Their flower bedecked yard had been suggested for the tour by a neighbor who had appreciated the lovely view. Marilyn, who did not belong to a garden club at the time, was truly surprised by all the attention to their garden. Marilyn’s efforts are simply out of love for nature’s beauty.

When the Gayda garden was viewed on the tour, the Inspiring Garden committee was so impressed that the decision to select this garden was almost a foregone conclusion. Just one glance of the photo and you’ll undoubtedly agree!

- Donna Schumann