



inside the Monk Botanical Gardens

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STORYBOOK GARDEN TO HONOR THE LEGACY OF SHOOTING VICTIM *The Marathon County Bar Association announces plans for Sara's Storybook Garden in partnership with Monk Botanical Gardens*

Wausau, Wisconsin, 11 Sept., 2019. Imagine a place in Wausau where the young (and young at heart) can actually explore their favorite book. Where a child can make tea in a hobbit's home, or chase fairy lights in a tunnel, a place in which kids can count the caterpillars or find a lost land on their pirate ship. Over a year and a half ago, a group of lawyers with the Marathon County Bar Association began to visualize a plan to honor the life of a colleague, Sara Quirt-Sann, who lost her life in the March 22, 2017, Wausau tragedy. An idea took root for a literature-themed garden when the group identified what elements would truly capture Sara's spirit: they were inspired by Sara's interest in gardening and her great love of literature, combined with the fact that the majority of her legal work was spent advocating for children.

"We wanted a garden that would come alive with suggestions from various children's books," said Christine Olsen, a local attorney who has been dedicated to this project.

Once the small committee had a vision, its members began to reach out to local community organizations for a site. "We contacted Monk Botanical Gardens - it was the first place we thought of that seemed to meet our needs and be the most natural fit." recalled Pam VanOoyen, the Marathon County Branch 5 Judicial Assistant (although not a lawyer, she became a part of the committee because of her close relationship with Sara and the legal community). The Gardens embraced the idea.

As to the current status of the project, committee member Attorney Robyn De Vos reports: "We have a budget, we have partnered with the Community Foundation as a fiscal agent, we have a beautiful blueprint prepared by Susie Murphy Jones of Landscape Solutions and we have already roped in a lot of individuals to start clearing the site of invasive species by hand." However, Attorney Dale Eaton, another dedicated member of the committee, emphasizes that the Bar Association's work in order to bring this project to full fruition has just begun. He reports that the committee will need to raise over 1 million dollars for the project, apply for grants, and hire designers and contractors for landscaping as well as specific structures. "We will need the full support of community organizations, businesses and individuals for labor, material and funds."

All in all, the committee is positive that this project will give justice to the life of Sara Quirt-Sann as well as provide a true benefit to the Wausau community at large. It will be a place to enrich the imagination by bringing children's storybooks to life.

The large structures include a full size hobbit house, a fairy tunnel, a pirate ship and more. In order to further foster a love of reading in the children who visit the garden, little libraries will be installed to create a perfect atmosphere for becoming immersed in a book in each unique space.

Monetary donations can be directed to the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin. Click on "Sara's Storybook Garden Fund" at <https://cfoncw.fcsuite.com/erp/donate>.

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