

Sophie and Zack Children's Book/Pinellas Schools Collaboration

Sunken Gardens Forever Foundation in partnership with Pinellas County Schools



"The mission of the Sunken Gardens Forever Foundation is to preserve and support St. Petersburg's Sunken Gardens and to further an understanding and appreciation for this historic landmark through education and philanthropy."

The *Sophie & Zack at Sunken Gardens* Educational Program has been designed to promote children's understanding and appreciation of both our state and community's cultural heritage as experienced at St. Petersburg's Sunken Gardens and to encourage their sense of stewardship for the gardens in the future.

Project Concept: Create an illustrated book about Sunken Gardens appropriate for young children and their adult guardians.

Project Goals: To introduce children (and their families) to Sunken Gardens through their Literacy, Science and Social Studies curriculum. (No matter how much we love the Gardens, we have to pass the baton of stewardship on to the next generation and that is the underlying goal for this project.)

A growing body of research shows that nature experiences support children's development of problem-solving, creativity and executive function. It also shapes physical health and can reduce stress while improving attention and focus.

Project Target Audience: All Title I 3rd graders in St. Petersburg (approximately 21 schools) Over a three-year period, books will be distributed to all third graders in 7 schools each year and offer them the experience of a field trip to Sunken Gardens (buses and reduced admittance included) after volunteers read the book to classes. The students will be given the books to keep and take home to read to family and friends.

Extra: Additional books will be printed to be sold in the Gift Shop. They will also be used for other children's educational programs at the Gardens and for other requesting schools.

*This model has been used successfully by the Henry B. Plant Museum in partnership with the Hillsborough County Public Schools for the past 12 years. Once donors see the positive response by children and educators, they are happy to fund reprints to continue the program.

Outcome: While books are great for children, paired with a hands-on field trip the experience is one that often stays with them for life. This is what the project will achieve for these 3rd-grade students.

Where we left off: We completed one school outreach visit and tour for students during the grand **Kick Off** event in March of 2020, including city dignitaries, school students, Pinellas County Schools' representatives, Sunken Garden's staff, supporters from the Historic Old Northeast neighborhood and others.

Funding: With funding of \$10,000 seed money from the Foundation, \$4,150 Historic Old Northeast Neighborhood Association DONATION, \$1,045 Old Northeast Garden Club to Honor Bill O'Grady, \$5,000 from Robin & Joe Reed, \$5,000 from Robin & Tom Gonzalez, \$5,000 from Roger Robson, and \$100 totaling \$30,295 we are going to print. The additional possibly \$4,355 needed for additional fees for buses will be raised over the next 3 years by the Foundation.

Next Steps: We anticipate restarting this program in January of 2024. We will give you dates for all upcoming events and training sessions. There will be chances for us to go to the schools and read to classes before their garden visits. Docents will also lead *Sophie and Zack* themed tours when the students do come to Sunken Gardens. We'd love for you to join in!