

# NORTH CAROLINA BOTANICAL GARDEN

## THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

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**PRESS RELEASE** –for immediate use

### **Botanical Garden Receives Grant Supporting Science and Nature Activities for Hospitalized Children**

Chapel Hill, NC: The North Carolina Botanical Garden’s Healing and Hope Through Science program has been awarded a **Sparks! Ignition Grant** from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The \$25,000 grant will be used to create a garden-on-wheels for hospitalized pediatric patients.

North Carolina Botanical Garden staff, in collaboration with the NC State University College of Design, will design and create a hands-on, interactive nature exhibit called The Plant Play Pushcart. This greenhouse-garden-on-wheels will provide a bedside field trip that is experiential, multisensory, and safe for hospitalized children at UNC Hospital.

Healing and Hope Through Science (HHTS) is a program of the North Carolina Botanical Garden that brings science and environmental education to children at UNC and Duke Hospitals, with the goal of promoting healing and hope through positive connections with nature.

“The Plant Play Pushcart will be an incredible new tool for us—a game-changer,” said Katie Stoudemire, Program Coordinator for the Healing and Hope Through Science (HHTS) program. The children Stoudemire works with typically are immune compromised and for that reason are not allowed contact with natural materials—soils, seeds, or live plants. “With this cart, which I imagine will include a sealed greenhouse-type structure with built-in gloves, these kids will be able to plant seeds and then participate in the magical experience of watching their seeds sprout.”

“We are very excited about this opportunity,” said Nancy Easterling, Director of Education at the Botanical Garden. “We know that contact with nature and natural sciences results in positive distraction as well as a decreased perception of pain for these children. The Plant Play Pushcart will bring environmental education to hospitalized children who are typically denied the healing effects that experiences in nature can produce.”

Sparks! Ignition Grants are designed to help libraries and museums solve challenging problems. They promote creativity and innovation by supporting promising new approaches to issues affecting libraries and museums across the country. “This grant program has tremendous potential to turn small investments of funds into nationally significant projects,” said Susan Hildreth, IMLS Director.

The IMLS grant award was announced in late July. Thirteen awards totaling \$304,866, matched with \$174,266 of non-federal funds, were given for this year’s Sparks! Ignition Grants. IMLS received 69 applications requesting nearly \$1.8 million.

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An additional grant for \$1200 for general support of HHTS was received in August from The Monday Life (<http://www.themondaylife.org/>). Other major funders of HHTS are the Oak Foundation and the UNC Volunteer Special Gifts Fund.

The North Carolina Botanical Garden, a unit of The University of North Carolina, has been a leader in native plant conservation and education in the southeastern United States for more than 40 years. In addition to the Healing and Hope Through Science program, the Botanical Garden provides Horticultural Therapy services and training throughout the state. For more information, visit: <http://ncbg.unc.edu> and <http://ncbg.unc.edu/healing-and-hope/>

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