

South East Chicago Commission Announces The 2023 Shirley J. Newsome Beautification Grant Awards

May 22, 2023 - The South East Chicago Commission (SECC) is honored to announce **The Shirley J. Newsome Beautification Grant Awards** for 2023. The program aims to provide micro-grants to neighborhood organizations and groups to support beautification and revitalization projects that enhance the physical attractiveness and quality of life within Hyde Park, Kenwood, Oakland, Washington Park and Woodlawn communities. Since 1999 the SECC has collectively granted more than \$1,000,000 in beautification funds. For 2023, the Elizabeth Louise Smith Fund, the Camelot Foundation and private donors have bound together to graciously support this year's projects.

In 2023, the SECC renamed the Neighborhood Enhancement Grant, which will now be presented as the **Shirley J. Newsome Beautification Program**, in honor of former Board Chair and community leader, Shirley J. Newsome, who passed in December 2022.

“For nearly 15 years, Ms. Newsome provided valuable insight, expertise, and guidance on how microgrants were dispersed. She directly impacted over 120 projects during her involvement with the program,” stated Diane Burnham, Executive Director for the SECC. “The SECC has worked to build communities from the inside out with strategic micro-investments that impact not only the neighborhoods we serve but also the neighbors themselves. Ultimately, we are working collectively to attract investments to the community at large”.

The SECC and Community Selection Committee are honored to announce eight community awards for 2023. The grant selection committee, comprised of community members from the five footprint neighborhoods, selected the following community groups for the strength of their proposals and the breadth of potential impact:

- **Burke Educational Garden and Space Enhancement Project by 2016 Ma’at** will install a stage at the Burke Garden along with rebuilding and painting the planters. There are at least two planned events involving planting within the beds and a "Harvest Celebration".
- **6100 S St. Lawrence Block Club** will rebuild community garden at the southeast corner of 62nd and St. Lawrence with the creation of 20 new raised beds in the open space, to develop a reading garden and a dog resting area.
- **Muddy Waters MOJO Museum Front Yard Beautification** will sod the front yard, repair and beautify the pavers from the sidewalk to the front door, add two trees and plant annual flowers in the front yard of the Muddy Waters House at 4339 South Lake Park Avenue.

- **Paradise Garden Project by Salaam Community Wellness Center** will enhance its current organic garden by designing and creating a walkable urban educational garden center. Currently there are 30 raised beds that produced between 25 and 30 varieties of fruits, vegetables and herbs during the last growing season. The project aims to educate visitors on the nutritional value of the produce in the garden.
- **Pocket Prairie Place by Woodlawn Clean Up: One Lot at a Time** will transform a current vacant city-owned lot into a “pocket prairie” garden which utilizes plants that are indigenous to the Chicagoland area. The prairie will adapt to the region’s climate, creating havens for insects, butterflies, birds and humans alike.
- **Sankofa Garden by the Sankofa Group** will develop a flower and food garden to improve the quality of life for Woodlawn residents by creating a flower garden for residents to utilize for planting, growing and eating whole and natural grown foods.
- **Spruce Park Beautification by Nichols Park PAC- Spruce Park Subcommittee** will beautify the half-block long garden beds with basic supplies and additional shrubs and foliage to help prevent erosion and damage from pets.
- **Woodlawn Botanical Nature Center by William Hill Center for the Arts** will create a rainwater shade garden at the Woodlawn Botanical Garden on 63rd and Stony Island.

Please contact Kiara Hardin, Program Coordinator, via email at kiara@secc-chicago.org to learn more about the 2023 Shirley J. Newsome Beautification Grant recipients and their projects.

About the South East Chicago Commission

The mission of the SECC is to facilitate and support economic development within the Southeast lakefront communities of Hyde Park, Kenwood, Oakland, Washington Park and Woodlawn to foster collaboration and coordination among businesses, organizations and institutions to promote the creation of jobs, investment and economic vitality.