

**Takoma Park Middle School
7611 Piney Branch Road
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
301-650-6444**

Dear Mr. Silverman,

We would like to share with you a wonderful 2-day project that our 300+ 6th grade students participated in at the end of the 2005 school year. Over the span of the 2 days, our students created a new butterfly garden; stenciled our storm drains to remind people not to dump; weeded and mulched existing gardens; removed large amounts of invasive plants such as garlic mustard and bush honeysuckle from the woods surrounding our school; and removed dead trees, replanted native trees, and created collars for other trees to prevent damage from weed whackers. Overall, we consider the days to be a great success and we know that our students learned many new skills by working on these projects. In time, we believe our students will become productive members of society, who will understand the value of service and will exemplify the spirit of community. Below are some pictures of students taken as they did their work:



Caring for trees by weeding and mulching.



Byrne Kelly, parent landscape architect, teaches students how make the butterfly garden.



Turning the soil to mix in amendments.



The final product, awaiting winged visitors!

We are very grateful for help from the community, and **especially** grateful to the Montgomery County Master Gardeners Landscape Design Group, who made it possible for us to provide such valuable, real-world experiences for our students. The Master Gardeners visited TPMS several weeks before our projects and measured our proposed butterfly garden area. They then produced a detailed plan including how to make the wooden borders and also suggestions for plant material. If you are in the neighborhood of the school some time this summer, stop by and see how well the new butterfly garden is doing. You will be amazed that students created it; this would not have been possible without the help and advice of the Masters Gardeners. While they were here, they also developed plans for gardens on the side of the school, which we plan to use in the community service days scheduled for next year. Having the plans ahead of time will allow us to write for grant money to buy the plants and other supplies needed to complete the garden.

We were impressed at the top-notch quality of the plans that the Master Gardeners prepared for us. We have a very tight budget for these service days and could never have afforded to pay a professional for these plans. We ask for you to share information about this project with the other Council members. We also urge the Montgomery County Council to continue to support and fund the Montgomery County Master Gardeners Program, so that all County residents will continue to have access to and benefit from their knowledge and skills.

Sincerely,

Ted Antonakos

Meryl Moran

Dave Pixler

6th grade Science Teachers