

Flowers, fruits and vegetables flourish at Gallagher Services

Catonsville resident Jeanne Marie Hannon doesn't mind getting her hands dirty if it means slowly watching the plants at Catholic Charities' Gallagher Services in Timonium transform into colorful flowers or luscious vegetables.

Cultivating plant life for the summer is an annual tradition for the St. Agnes, Catonsville, parishioner and client of the residential and day program for people with developmental disabilities, and she was proud to contribute to Gallagher Services' two-day annual flower sale during the second weekend in May.

"I love the bright rainbow colors of the flowers," said Ms. Hannon as she wheeled a cart of pansies across the Shamrock Gardens greenhouse on the Gallagher Services campus during the sale. "I'm also an artist. So, these plants are special to me."

Plants sold during the sale included petunias, phlox, impatiens, dahlias, begonias, salvia, ageratum, lobelia, marigolds and a variety of herbs, all grown at the greenhouse, assisted by the staff and clients of the program.

The 4,032-square-foot greenhouse, a gift from Jeanne and Mike Sullivan, was built in 2003 to create an enterprise for learning that is self-sustaining, said Brian Trees, director of Gallagher Services' day program.

"We look at things backward," Mr. Trees said. "Our approach has been to first offer people a good horticultural experience and a good environment in which to work. We then look for the crops and activities that will help us do that."

Assisted by a client crew of six, Cindy Ryan, coordinator of greenhouse operations, works year-round to grow the flowers and herbs, and in the spring begins a campus-run vegetable garden where they grow tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash, cantaloupe and corn.

"This is our first year with the corn," Ms. Ryan said. "We'll see how that goes. But the clients are doing a great job with the garden. I'm confident we have a nice

harvest.”

In addition to the annual May flower sale, the program also holds an annual Poinsettia sale before Christmas and the vegetables grown in the garden are offered to the staff for sale and served at several functions at Gallagher Services throughout the year, said Bergeda Minnis, day program manager.

“Our clients work very hard to help these plants grow,” Ms. Minnis said. “It’s wonderful for them to see and taste the fruits of their labor.”