

Muriel Lanford, our Master Gardener for the Summer Season, has spent most of her life helping others. She began her professional life after earning a business degree from Texas State University. Finding limited opportunities for women in business, she went back to school to become a Licensed Vocational Nurse. While working as an LVN she went on to earn a B.S. in Nursing in 1986, then an M.S. in 1997. As a trauma nurse working in the emergency room, Muriel learned that traumatic physical injuries entailed even more serious psychological and emotional consequences that endured long after physical injuries healed. This learning gradually expanded to the special care and treatment needed to treat the effects of trauma on the brain. Her extended experience in this field enabled her to join a team of professionals who travel around the U.S. giving seminars to medical professionals on the care and treatment of traumatic injury victims.

Muriel's experience with the effects of traumatic physical injuries on the brain led her into her next volunteer vocation: the care and treatment of victims of both sexual and labor trafficking, crimes more lucrative for criminals than drug trafficking. Her concern was first aroused by a law enforcement friend who shared the details of a sex trafficking case that she was working on. It was a TV miniseries on the topic, *Human Trafficking*, which galvanized her interest. Muriel felt a calling and got involved. She now serves Bexar and surrounding counties, giving talks designed to prevent young people from becoming victims of sex trafficking, and to educate the public in the identification and prevention of both sex and labor trafficking and in how to care for victims after they are rescued. She works with schools and parents to educate youth and adults about the tactics used by traffickers as well as with the public at large on recognition of the signs of people who are being trafficked. She also works with volunteer mentors who help victims of sex trafficking to learn how to reenter normal life. (More information is available at ransomedlifetexas.org).

While Muriel's professional focus has been in the health field, she also has deep roots in the soil, coming from multi generations of Texas farmers and ranchers and from a long line of Texas Aggies. Her grandfather and father were both Aggies, making life growing up in Austin at times a bit difficult. It was from her father, with a degree in Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, that Muriel developed her love of the land and gardening. Although she saw very little of him as he worked 6½ days a week selling and repairing tractors and caring for a small herd of cattle on the side, Muriel remembers fondly those times when he shared with her his love of working the land and raising cattle.

In high school, Muriel had a job at a local nursery. There, she developed her love of plants. She smiles, recalling, "It was the most fun job ever!"

When she left home and began her professional life, Muriel had a small garden whenever she could and always promised herself that she would get more involved with gardening when she had more time. That time came when Muriel developed a serious illness and had to take time off from her hectic work and volunteer schedule to recuperate. She took that time to take classes to become a Master Gardener in Bexar County Class #46.

Now recovered and semi-retired, Muriel divides her free time between her two volunteer pursuits: leading seminars about the treatment of trauma victims and Master Gardener activities. Her early MG time was involved with the two Children's Gardens, first SABOT, then Hardberger Park. She spent several years working at each garden. Of this time, she notes, "There's nothing like seeing a child's face when they see their food come up out of the dirt." She loves seeing the excitement children find in seeing things grow. At the Hardberger Park garden she formed a special relationship with a 12-year-old autistic child who thrilled her with his "wonder" at the smallest things in the garden.