

The agricultural and beautification movement in the “Quiet Corner”, much like most of Connecticut is growing with leaps and bounds. During 2014, I was blessed to be a part of this movement of local activists whose many projects included establishing a site for the Michaela’s Garden Project. The Garden was successfully planted at our town library courtyard with plans to expand the site next year. The involvement and collaboration of so many community members ranged from the Agriculture Commission, Scouts, Town Hall, Friends of the Library and even included the District Health Department.

The town of Killingly was honored to have Dr. William Petit help to dedicate the Garden on September 14, 2015 in honor of Michaela. Her soulful presence was felt by all who attended the ceremony and heard Dr. Petit’s reflections about Michaela, Hayley and Jennifer Petit. The Four O’clock blooms, which do not normally open in the daytime, were in full color that morning. Some things, even those guided by nature, are beyond our control and pleasantly defy logic.

Establishment of a Child’s State Flower provides a statement of hope and message of resilience for the continued growth of agriculture and the future of Connecticut. Our children are a most precious and invaluable resource, they will carry on the legacy of the good work, ingenuity and sustainability of our state while planting the seeds of growth for generations to come. Sadly, many children in Connecticut slip through the cracks, suffer from illness, neglect, crime or tragedy, such as the case of Newtown and the Petit tragedy. There is no better symbol of hope for the future of our most precious jewels – our children than with an act of dedication of a State Children’s flower...a gift from nature which reflects beauty, vibrant color, growth, rebirth and the best the world has to offer.

I never knew Michaela Petit, though after meeting Dr. Petit and hearing him share his very personal memories, I feel a connection to this child whose vision was well before her time. She might never have imagined the “Change she would be in this world” as these Gardens of Four O’clock plants continue to pepper our beautiful state and spread her benevolence. Establishment of a Children’s State Flower defines a public statement of Connecticut’s commitment to all of our children. The story of Michaela’s Four O’clock, is one of triumph over tragedy, of hope whose brightness overshadows despair. This flower unknowingly selected itself to represent the precious children of Connecticut who will plant the legacies of generations to come. Some things, even those guided by nature, are beyond our control and pleasantly defy logic. A dedication of the Four O’clock as our Children’s State flower, guided by nature is a very logical act.

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