

Garden earns national acclaim

• **Youth In Need backyard garden named one of country's top 50**

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ST. CHARLES

The ground behind Youth In Need's St. Charles headquarters lies fallow. The waterfall, which flows into the koi pond, sports frozen rivulets while winter holds the new garden in its icy fist.

In a few months that will change. The organization's back yard is home to the Monsanto Fund Science Discovery Garden, which was recognized last week as one of the top 50 new gardens in the nation by the National Gardening Association.

"It all started with Susan Rentfrow, who we met at a volunteer fair," April Klutenkamper, the organization's marketing director, said Tuesday. "She is a master gardener who was interested in doing something small — maybe a few raised beds and some vegetables."

That concept was expanded to a 6,000-square-foot haven for the children, youth and families it serves. Klutenkamper said the garden, located at YIN's facility at 1815 Boone's Lick Road, will serve roughly 1,500 children and teens from her organization per year.

"There are plans to open the garden to the public as well so many more will be able to enjoy it," she said. "It had an immediate impact on the children we serve. I remember looking out the window last year, when the garden was in bloom and seeing students clustered around the koi pond writing haiku. It's where they migrated to."

The garden was chosen from a field of 700 gardens throughout the country. The association chose 150 gardens, but only 50 of them were new gardens.

"National Gardening Association is proud to support this terrific kids garden," NGA President Michael Metallo said in a news release. "Youth In Need's program was selected because of a

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Garden:

demonstrated commitment to actively and creatively engaging youth in the gardening process and to improving the community."

Three master gardeners developed the garden's design, which includes a three-tiered koi pond, a gazebo, butterfly bushes, vegetable garden, children's fort, sand area, even a tee-pee.

"There are more than 100

plants, tree and shrubs," Klutenkamper said. "It's quite an honor to be chosen; we're very proud of it."

Youth In Need is an eastern Missouri regional agency that started as a shelter for homeless youth in 1974. It now serves more than 10,000 children, youth and families every year with residential treatment, outreach, early childhood, educational and counseling programs.

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Youth In Need's award-winning Monsanto Fund Science Discovery Garden was in full bloom last summer.

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