



**Respond With Love® Gardens
Program Implemented To Help
Communities Throughout Mississippi
News Release**

Jackson, Mississippi – July 12, 2013 – A major effort to help communities throughout Mississippi is now underway. More than 1 million flower bulbs are being planted in 21 towns and cities to enhance the environment in Mississippi. These summer-blooming bulbs will likely start to green and flower later this summer, probably in August. Many of these flower bulbs will multiply and bloom in the years to come.

America Responds With Love, a national non-profit organization, donated the flower bulbs to create Respond With Love Gardens in Bay Saint Louis, Canton, Carthage, Como, Decatur, Ellisville, Fayette, Goodman, Jackson, Kosciusko, Lucedale, Magee, Marks, Mendenhall, Meridian, Oakland, Okolona, Pelahatchie, Petal, Picayune, and Quitman.



A child receives flower bulbs to plant in Respond With Love Gardens in Attala County in Mississippi.

The Mississippi Municipal League, Keep Mississippi Beautiful, the Mississippi Beverage Association, and the United States Department of Agriculture are working together with America Responds With Love to implement these civic efforts in Mississippi.

Respond With Love Gardens are planted in public areas of the participating communities to enhance the locality and the environment. These Respond With Love Gardens are being planted in such public places as parks, schools, police stations, fire stations, hospitals, community centers, and similar public facilities; along public highways; and in publicly-viewable areas at entrances to neighborhoods and in the front yards of communities striving to improve their town and city as well as re-build areas hit by tornadoes or hurricanes.

“The Respond With Love Gardens Program is one that every city should take advantage of,” explained Mr. Robbie Brown, Director of Member Services for the Mississippi Municipal League. “All local leaders want a beautiful community, however there is not always room in the budget for beautification. This program fills a need for cities and towns by providing them with flower bulbs to beautify their community.”

"We are so happy to partner with America Responds With Love to better the lives of people across our state and nation," stated Ms. Sarah Kountouris, Executive Director of the Keep Mississippi Beautiful. "Keep Mississippi Beautiful believes strongly in the importance of community greening efforts, and our affiliates across Mississippi are working to improve and revitalize communities through actions as simple -- but powerful -- as beautification."

Members of the business community have joined to support these civic efforts.

“Our Mississippi Beverage Association and its member companies throughout our state that market the Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, Dr Pepper Snapple Group and Nehi brands of beverages have a longstanding commitment supporting our local communities and being pro-active to improve our state’s physical, economic and environmental health,” explained Mr. Ron Aldridge, Executive Vice President and General Counsel of the Mississippi Beverage Association.

“We’re excited to partner with Keep Mississippi Beautiful and America Responds With Love to enhance the beauty of many smaller cities in every part of our state by providing each of these communities with thousands of flower bulbs to create Respond With Love Gardens.”

Mr. Aldridge continued: “This program is an example of the difference we can all make by working together to insure every community in Mississippi is an inviting and attractive place for those of us who call it home and for all we welcome to visit and experience the hospitality of our people – our greatest beauty.”

Several of the communities have worked with America Responds With Love for years to enhance their area as they strive to recover from disasters that have impacted Mississippi. Bay Saint Louis is one such area.

: "Before Hurricane Katrina destroyed Bay Saint Louis and my home, I'd only thought about recovery efforts in the abstract," explained Mrs. Katharine Truett Ohman, a volunteer working almost full-time both independently and through various city, county and community agencies in Hancock County. “Despite living much of my life in a hurricane zone, I was unprepared for the devastation; in particular, the almost complete loss of trees and greenery. My experience as both a mental health professional and licensed landscaper put me in a position to better recognize the short and long-term effects.”

“American Responds With Love furnished recovery assistance in several ways from the outset,” Mrs. Ohman continued. “But America Responds With Love has continued to aid my community's re-greening efforts for several years. Its participation has put that recovery years ahead of what it might have been otherwise.”

Other cities and towns – not just those dealing with disaster recovery – also are working to improve their communities. Many are small communities that are often times overlooked as the focus is on larger localities.

Fayette is one of these communities.

“We are elated and extremely excited about the contribution of America Responds With Love towards the beautification of our rural and impoverished community,” stated Ms. Janell Edwards, Executive Director of Fayette Community Service Organization. “We have shared the good news with residents and our local elected officials. Everyone – young and old included – are eager to help plant and excited about the project! We are deeply humbled and honored to be one of the chosen recipients of this wonderful gift.”

Carthage is another community that is a recipient of assistance from America Responds With Love.

“We have been working diligently on this project,” noted Mr. Aaron Ray Akers, Director of Economic & Community Development at the Central Electric Power Association. The Association is working to help Carthage. “At McMillan Park, we have installed a 100' x 30" new flower bed and planted cannas there. We have prepared another area 40' x 30' and made a gladiolus garden. In addition, we brought in 18 large dump truck loads of top soil, 5 very large boulders that were donated by a member of the community, and prepared a new bed that will become a shade garden. Other Respond With Love Gardens are being planted in other locations within Carthage.”

Among those supporting the creation of these Respond With Love Gardens is the United States Department of Agriculture.

"The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and our offices across Mississippi are appreciative of the opportunity in working with America Responds With Love and Keep Mississippi Beautiful to bring smiles to people's faces with the gift of flowers," stated Ms. Jeannine May, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Public Affairs Officer. “These flowers will provide pollinators for the USDA People's Garden Program as well as help improve the quality of life in neighborhoods, around nursing homes, and in schools; the flowers will bring joy to many. I look forward to many more opportunities to help beautify our landscapes.”

“In the planting of flower bulbs, we are focused on the future and how the communities can work together to enhance the State of Mississippi,” said Mr. Richard McDonough, President and Chief Executive Officer of America Responds With Love, Inc. “The citizens of these 21 towns and cities will have beautiful flower bulbs in bloom in their communities to brighten their futures. The support of the Mississippi Municipal League, Keep Mississippi Beautiful, and the Mississippi Beverage Association has been critical to implement these civic efforts in Mississippi.”

“It truly is a great symbol of hope for communities throughout Mississippi.”

America Responds With Love, Inc. is a national non-profit organization with its main office in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. The organization provides a variety of products and services to people truly in need as well as to communities truly in need throughout the United States. Founded in 1989, the organization includes programs dating back to 1982.

The non-profit organization has been active in helping people and communities truly in need throughout Mississippi, among other states, for a number of years. You can view details about the charitable efforts of America Responds With Love at its website, <http://www.respondwithlove.org>.

If you or your business or organization would be interested in participating in the Respond With Love Gardens, please contact Mr. McDonough at richard@respondwithlove.org or at 1-321-AMERICA (1-321-263-7422).



One of the Canna flowers planted previously in a Respond With Love Garden in Bay Saint Louis was in full bloom in June of 2013.



Hundreds of thousands of flower bulbs
have been planted in recent years in
Respond With Love Garden in Bay Saint Louis and
Hancock County. These Caladiums are in full bloom in
in the Maluhia Garden in Diamondhead.
The Diamondhead Garden Club helped
plant these flower bulbs in 2012.



These Caladiums are in bloom at
McLeod Park in Hancock County.



Trays of flower bulbs are loaded to deliver to neighborhood organizations in Jackson as well as Kosciusko and Picayune.



Individuals are helping to prepare a Respond With Love Garden in McMillan Park in Carthage.



Residents in Bay Saint Louis have been encouraged to plant flower bulbs in public areas and publicly-viewable areas throughout Hancock County. These individuals were looking at a number of Dahlia varieties (above) and crates of Gladiolus (below) at Main and Second Streets in Bay Saint Louis in June of 2013.





Members of the Fayette Community Service Organization are seen here getting ready to plant flower bulbs in Respond With Love Gardens in Fayette.



Flowers are in bloom in a Respond With Love Garden in Fayette.



The City of Lucedale planted flower bulbs
in areas throughout the community.
This Respond With Love Garden is located at the
City of Lucedale Information Kiosk.



Flower bulbs were planted in front of the
Lucedale City Hall.

“The City of Lucedale is very thankful for the bulbs furnished through America Responds,” stated Ms. Kathy Johnson, City Clerk for the City of Lucedale.
“We are lifting spirits, brightening lives, and enriching our community with flowers from America Responds With Love.”



These Caladiums are in bloom in Ellisville.

Ms. Patricia Waldrup of Ellisville explained that area residents have been quite pleased the Respond With Love Gardens:

“Our town has never looked as nice as it does today; those bulbs are beautiful.”

“Thank you Ellisville for making the 4th of July a beautiful place to display the FLAG.”

”What a difference a flower can make !!!!”



Flowers in bloom at Respond With Love Garden
in Ellisville.



Children are seen here selecting flower bulbs to plant in Respond With Love Gardens in Kosciusko and other area communities near the Ross Barnett Reservoir. The United States Department of Agriculture helped distribute these flower bulbs to plant Respond With Love Gardens in a number of communities in Mississippi