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Campus Recreation and Intramurals: Georgia Southern Golf Course

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Operation Pollinator Wildflower Plots

Amount Granted: \$2,700.00

Amount spent: \$1838.28

### ***Project Outcomes/Value***

**Project Timeline** – The Operation Pollinator wildflower plots have been planted, although they will be evolving over time as the plants mature.

**Project Outcomes** – The goal of the Operation Pollinator project was to convert bahiagrass areas into wildflower areas in order to increase the number of pollinating insects. Long term, the goal is to help build the pollinating insect population, which has seen a decrease in past years. We have seen a fairly high quantity of blooms from several different species of flowers. There have been a large number of insects utilizing the blooms. The blooms have occurred in a cyclical fashion, as different plant types mature and bloom at different times. This creates peaks and valleys of blooms.

We have faced some challenges with establishing the wildflower plots this year. Our initial plan was to seed the wildflowers during the fall. Extended drought weather during the fall required us to delay the wildflower seeding. Half of the seed was planted during the winter dormancy period to allow the seed to establish during the spring. The University shut down caused us to delay planting the second half of the seed until early summer. Dry weather slowed the germination of the wildflower seeds planted during the summer, but germination should continue to occur as late summer and early fall rains return. The use of native seed helps the seedlings survive dry periods when the plants will enter a dormant state.

**Sustainability Improvements** – Prior to converting the bahiagrass areas to the wildflower plots, the areas were treated approximately 3 times per year with herbicide to control broadleaf weeds. With the wildflowers in place, the herbicides will no longer be used. Instead, the area will be mowed one time per year in order to redistribute the wildflower seeds and remove any woody, undesirable plants. We have already seen a large number of pollinating insects utilizing the wildflowers, which should help to increase the populations of the insects in our surrounding area.

**Outreach** – The Operation Pollinator project is publicized through signage and posters in the golf course clubhouse. We also used Twitter feeds to engage the public outside of the University setting. Between the Georgia Southern Golf Course Twitter account and my professional account, we reach approximately 6,000 individuals.<sup>27</sup> Operation Pollinator and Center for Sustainability signs were also

placed at each of the wildflower plots on the golf course.

**Budget Report** – As shown in the below budget report, the project was under budget by \$861.72. Due to dormant seeding during the winter months, we opted not to utilize Starter Fertilizer, which would have leached from the soil prior to the flowers needing the nutrients. The signage for the plots was created in house at no additional cost to us.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Spent	Seed	\$2000	\$1838.28	Starter Fertilizer	\$400	\$0	Signs	\$300
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2700</b>	<b>\$1838.28</b>								

**Student and Community Impact** – As being a part of Campus Recreation and Intramurals, we are a large employer of students. Student employees are utilized as the primary labor source for the golf course, and the students were responsible for a large amount of the work involved with the installation and growing of the wildflower plots. Our ongoing maintenance for the project is minimal, but whenever a need arises, students will be responsible for the maintenance of the plots.

The golf course is open to both students, and the general public. Because of this, any golfer that comes to the property is able to see and interact with the wildflower plots. During an average year, approximately 24,000 golfers play the golf course, with approximately 50% of the play coming from students, and 50% of the play coming from general public. Because of this, we were able to impact several thousand unique individuals.

**Grant Leverage** – The grant was not used to leverage additional grants of papers. However, we did receive exposure from a magazine and social media that would not have otherwise occurred.

**Project abstract** – Operation Pollinator is an international program, aimed at boosting the number of pollinating insects through the installation of a diverse wildflower mixture. Golf courses can provide sanctuaries to bumblebees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects by enhancing relatively undisturbed areas. Over the past 5 years, Georgia Southern University Golf Course has been able to successfully install approximately 4 acres of native flowers, replacing areas that were previously bahiagrass. Through the installation of these wildflower areas, we have been able to witness a large number of pollinating insects utilizing the golf course.