

# Environmental concerns take root at McQuaid

## Garden serves several causes

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

BRIGHTON — Gardening is nothing new to Jason Genthner.

But performing these tasks while wearing a tie, dress shirt and slacks? That's another story.

"You'll probably never see this again," remarked Jason, a 15-year-old freshman at McQuaid Jesuit High School.

Jason is one of several McQuaid students who use their free period to tend a brand-new garden at the school, located at 1800 Clinton Ave. S.

Although located just a couple of blocks from lilac-rich Highland Park, the primary goal of McQuaid's garden is not beautification. Actually, this is a multi-purpose project which not only addresses environmental issues, but also assists charitable causes.

The "McQuaid Biodiversity Project" was begun earlier this spring under the direction of Robert Kidera, who serves as a theology and social studies instructor at McQuaid.

According to Kidera, the project will serve four purposes:

- To protect endangered plant species.
  - To grow only organic vegetables.
- Crops will be donated for AIDS Rochester and Mt. Carmel House, a hospice located on Rochester's Planet Street. Kidera explained that immune systems of people served by these organizations are weak and cannot easily digest fertilized, non-organic products.

"It's a lot better for your body, and for the plants," Kidera said. "We're also trying to take up the slack of government programs being cut."

•To create a "historical garden," pat-



(From left) McQuaid Jesuit High School students Jason Genthner, Kieran Chaudhry, Robert Whitcomb, and Martin Ferris use their free periods to tend a new garden, promoting organically grown foods.

S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

terned after famous garden-growers such as Thomas Jefferson.

"To develop a "succession garden," so that environmental-science students can study the natural succession of ecosystems.

The 2,000-square-foot facility, located on the southeast corner of McQuaid's school grounds, is still in its fledgling stages. Kidera predicts that the first crop — lettuce — will be ready for harvest in late June, with three dozen other vegetables scheduled to be harvested by this coming October. He added that plans call for the garden to eventually be enclosed by a greenhouse.

Approximately 20 youths and eight

faculty members are currently involved in the effort. Several of the young students are using this as their service project which all McQuaid students are required to complete before graduation.

Jason — who lives in a rural part of Henrietta in southern Monroe County — said the project is a good learning experience for students from urban and suburban communities.

"Out in the country, you really know how much commitment it takes to get this done. People from the city are finally starting to appreciate what we do every day," said Jason.

Kieran Chaudhry, a 17-year-old junior,

said a cooperative spirit has pervaded the effort, regardless of how much gardening experience one has.

"Everybody's been real helpful, and nobody's said, 'I don't want to do it because I've never done it before.' They say, 'Can you teach me?'" Kieran observed.

However, there is one department which suffers from the project: students' clothing.

"It's not healthy for school uniforms," said Jason as he attempted to wipe off his muddy trousers.

"We ought to put in for a grant for a washing machine," Kidera added with a laugh.

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