

## ***Monarchs Across Georgia Background and History***

In May of 2000, an Eisenhower Plan for Improvement of Math and Science grant was awarded to the State Botanical Garden of Georgia for two teacher workshops. The University of Minnesota's Dr. Karen Oberhauser, scientist and founder of the *Monarchs in the Classroom* program, came to Georgia with associates Michelle Prysby and Keri Buisman to train approximately 40 classroom teachers and 20 non-formal educators associated with the Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia (EEA). Participants spent three days learning the natural history of the monarch butterfly, practicing skills for rearing caterpillars and caring for adult butterflies, and teaching activities from the *Monarchs in the Classroom* curriculum.

Under the leadership of Anne Shenk, Director of Education at the State Botanical Garden, planning began with Dr. Oberhauser and EEA members to implement a strategy for disseminating the exciting *Monarchs in the Classroom* program across the state. A second *Monarchs in the Classroom* workshop led by several participants from the initial workshop was held at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia in Athens in September 2000. A new component on Service-Learning added to the agenda of this workshop was extremely successful.

In January 2001, the *Monarchs Across Georgia (MAG)* Steering Committee was formed. Members of the committee began making plans to host additional workshops, looking for funding sources, and developing strategies for implementing the program on a statewide level. After one year, the committee had succeeded in attaining state SDU certification and offered five additional SDU workshops as well as numerous shorter hands-on training sessions at conferences and symposia. In addition, Barbara Payne - a driving force behind bringing the monarchs program to Georgia - was named as *Monarchs Across Georgia State Coordinator*. She remained in this position until 2004. Laura Bryant and Mary Terry were co-chairs until 2004. Susan Meyers and Trecia Neal were co-chairs from 2004 – 2007, Trecia Neal was chair in 2008, and Naomi Thompson and Ginny Elliott were co-chairs in 2009-2010.

The facilitator program and manual were created in 2004. In an attempt to expand the number of facilitators, a mentor program was started in 2008.

Susan and Trecia began offering and leading a week-long trip to the monarch overwintering sites in February each year. *Monarchs Across Georgia (MAG)* has traveled to Michoacan in an effort to generate awareness and understanding between two cultures through the study of monarch butterflies. Since the beginning, donations have allowed the Mexico Book Project to bring elementary-level books written in Spanish to students who are taking care of monarch butterflies in Mexico. Two teacher

scholarships were offered for the 2010 trip and will be offered every year. They are supported by *Monarchs Across Georgia* plant sales.

The Chrysalis Newsletter, first published in 2005, continues to educate interested members with topics related to the monarch butterfly and pollinators, including research, citizen science opportunities, trips and events, and habitat restoration are included in this publication. The 1<sup>st</sup> e-newsletter was sent out in June, 2008.

A Pollinator Habitat Certification program was started in 2005 to encourage and highlight the importance and decline of pollinators. Applicants receive an aluminum, weather resistant sign to install in their gardens.

The Map Asclepias Project (MAP) was created to gather data from butterfly and native plant enthusiasts. A milkweed distribution database/ map in GIS and milkweeds of Georgia scrapbook will be created. This data will also help prioritize future milkweed restoration and education efforts.

In 2007, the 1<sup>st</sup> Butterfly Symposium was offered. This is a 1 day event teaching about butterfly biology, pollinators, and habitat. Interest was high for this learning day and the opportunity to purchase *Monarchs Across Georgia* items or useful books.

“My Monarch Coloring Book” was printed and for sale in 2008.

Careful work was done by Susan Meyers on the organization website. The site contains numerous necessary forms, invaluable resources for DVDs, books, websites, or projects, contacts and jobs for *Monarchs Across Georgia*, GPS correlations for the curriculum, and advertisements for events.

Citizen Science projects such as Monarch Larval Monitoring Project, Monarch Tagging, Project MonarchHealth, Symbolic Migration, and Tracking Monarchs are promoted on the website and in workshops.

Enthusiasm remains high among teachers and the *Monarchs Across Georgia* steering committee. A great effort has been spent to ensure that the statewide effort will provide Georgia’s teachers with exemplary curricula meeting state standards; students with opportunities to experience wonder and get excited about learning; families with ways to become involved with their child’s studies; and communities with ways to enhance and support conservation education in their schools. The mission and goals were updated in 2009 to reflect the education of families, students, and communities, the focus on all pollinators, and creation of pollinator habitat.