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## Allendale Association in Lake Villa set to host its greenhouse sale



***Allendale teacher Nanci Lunsford and a student tend plants in the greenhouse. An Allendale Association plant sale will be May 9 and 10.***

Courtesy of Lekas & Levine PR

Allendale teacher Nanci Lunsford paces her "classroom" -- a working greenhouse on Allendale's Lake Villa Campus -- pruning plants as she talks about her students.

Allendale Association is a not-for-profit facility for children with emotional and behavioral problems and challenges. Some are victims of abuse or neglect, while others may suffer from mental illness.

Horticultural therapy is one of the many ways Allendale's experts help troubled youth put down healthy roots.

"Caring for something that's alive is very beneficial for these kids," says Lunsford, who has a background in floral design and horticulture. "Here, they relax. They're engaged. They can create beautiful, living things. They can be successful."

Some of their work will be on display during the Allendale Greenhouse Sale from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, May 8, and Saturday, May 9. The campus is one mile west of the Route 83/Grand Avenue intersection.

There will be a full line of annuals, herbs, hanging baskets, and premium vegetables for gardeners, including peppers, pumpkins, cucumbers, and coveted heirloom tomatoes. New this year is a large assortment of succulents suitable for dish gardens or rock gardens. Mini- and large-sized orchid plants are priced in the \$6 to \$20 range. Visit [www.allendale4kids.org](http://www.allendale4kids.org)

Lunsford's classroom spans the Bernard Rinella Horticultural Center (the greenhouse), flower and vegetable gardens, and some of Allendale's sprawling 100-acre campus.

Students can take classes, or even work for pay -- transplanting in the greenhouse, tending the gardens, manning a landscaping crew. Some of them will go on to work for local garden centers and florists.

It's all part of Allendale's extensive vocational program, which also includes a hands-on auto shop, wood shop, laundry, home economics kitchen, landscaping program and off-campus thrift store.

"Students not only learn practical career skills here, they learn that they are 'good at something,'" Lunsford said.

According to the American Horticultural Therapy Association, the benefits of gardening have been acknowledged for centuries. But in the last 70 years, "HT" has become a recognized form of therapy.

Used with seniors, veterans, and the disabled, it's effective for treating juvenile offenders, drug addicts, and abuse victims. The Chicago Botanic Garden has sponsored an HT professional training program for two decades. Allendale's horticulture therapy program is 15 years old.

"It's a new experience for students," Lunsford said. "Remember, most of them are city kids. They haven't had much interaction with nature. They're afraid of bugs. These sales are huge for the kids. When someone buys a plant the students have grown, it gives them an enormous sense of accomplishment."