National Garden Clubs Inc. Welcomes New President

Mississippian Gay L. Austin leads one of the nation’s most-recognized nonprofits and largest volunteer gardening organization in the world

ST. LOUIS (May 6, 2019) — Gay L. Austin of McComb, Miss., has been installed as the 46th president of one of the nation’s most-recognized nonprofits – National Garden Clubs Inc., the largest volunteer gardening organization in the world.

The installation was held May 2 at NGC’s 90th annual convention in Biloxi, Miss. As president, Austin will devote much of her two-year term traveling coast-to-coast to promote National Garden Clubs’ causes and projects, seek new ideas geared to current needs and network with many of the organization’s 175,000 members.

As she guides the national organization, Austin will work with NGC members to embrace a topic she is passionate about – fostering local gardening projects that conserve and preserve natural resources and encouraging young people in communities to assist in those efforts. “National Garden Clubs offers programs that promote learning opportunities in conservation and preservation. By encouraging member clubs to involve youth in these efforts, we are shaping future leaders who will be dedicated to conserving and preserving our outdoor world,” she said. In addition, Austin will support NGC’s Plant America, an initiative that focuses on gardens and gardening with an emphasis on community service, as well as the Plant America Community Project Grants program, which provides funding to member clubs that implement gardening projects in their communities.

Austin, who hails from Liberty, Miss., previously served as first vice president of National Garden Clubs Inc. She has held various positions nationally, including chairman of the Organization Study Committee and the Award of Excellence initiative to recognize outstanding non-member individuals and organizations that advance NGC causes. Austin also served as recording secretary on the board of directors for National Garden Clubs Inc. She is an accredited master flower show judge and horticulture instructor for numerous NGC flower show schools and symposiums.

On the district, state and local level, Austin has been a member of the board of directors of The Garden Clubs of Mississippi Inc. since 1995, and was state president from 2009 to 2011. She also served as chairman of NGC’s annual convention in Mississippi in 2003 and was editor of the state garden club magazine for four years. Austin has been a member of the McComb Garden Club for over 30 years and also is a member of the Flower Lovers Club in McComb and the Natchez Garden Club.

Austin, a certified Master Gardener, is past president of and an active member in the Pike County Master Gardeners of the Mississippi State University Extension. She is on the executive committee of Keep Mississippi Beautiful, an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, a national nonprofit that promotes community education, cleanup efforts and beautification and the Mississippi Heritage Trust, which works to preserve and restore endangered historic places in the state.
Austin holds an associate’s degree in nursing from Southwest Mississippi Community College in Summit, Miss. As a registered nurse, she served in the emergency room at Southwest Regional Medical Center and as office manager of Southwest Mississippi Ear, Nose and Throat Clinic and Austin Medical Consultants Inc. in McComb.

In addition, Austin served as president and is an active member on the board of directors and a volunteer at PALS Rescue Inc., a no-kill animal shelter in Pike County, Miss. She also served as a board member and past president of the Pike County Chamber of Commerce, the McComb Junior Auxiliary and the Pike County Arts Council. Austin is an accomplished multimedia artist who studied at Newcomb College at Tulane University in New Orleans, La., and many of her works are in a number of private and corporate collections. Some of her works also have been donated toward fundraising efforts at community events.

About National Garden Clubs Inc.

Members of National Garden Clubs [www.gardenclub.org](http://www.gardenclub.org) grow the world and green communities. NGC comprises 50 state clubs and a National Capital Area club, 60 national affiliated organizations within the United States, 5,000 member garden clubs and 330 international affiliated organizations around the globe. With nearly 175,000 members, National Garden Clubs Inc. is one of the nation’s most-recognized nonprofits and largest volunteer gardening organization in the world whose members come together to create a powerful international voice and vast network to advance common interests.

Headquartered in St. Louis and founded in 1929, National Garden Clubs Inc. fosters opportunities, education and resources for members to participate in garden-related activities for noteworthy causes, such as conservation efforts, school gardens, natural disaster relief and community beautification. National initiatives include Plant America, which focuses on how gardens and gardening play an integral role in community service; youth, school gardens and scholarship programs; Blue Star Memorial Marker and Gold Star Families for the Gold Star Memorial Marker programs that commemorate U.S. servicemen and servicewomen; and funding and support for the Butterfly Garden at the United States Botanic Garden and the Friendship Garden at the United States National Arboretum in Washington D.C. In addition, NGC collaborates with other like-minded organizations in ongoing programs including the protection of pollinators, amphibians and wildlife, reforestation, landscaping for Habitat for Humanity homes, garden therapy, recycling and floral design and flower shows.

# # #

(Media Contact: Patricia Binder, 636-775-2378, Binder PR and Marketing Communication, agent for National Garden Clubs Inc.)