

News Release

Senior Mackenzie Cochran Propagates Passion for Plants

By Elizabeth Tollefson on Thursday, February 8, 2018



One can almost imagine it, several generations of family passing down gardening tips, trading varieties of their favorite plants, enjoying trips to the greenhouse together, while propagating their passion for growing things.

Senior Mackenzie Cochran, Grand Forks, N.D., doesn't have to imagine it; her family shares a longtime love of gardening that started with her great grandmother.

"Growing up in Sebeka, Minn., I loved going to Gordy's Greenhouse with my grandma and my mother every year," Cochran remembers. "My grandma and I have traded plants, and enjoyed countless hours talking about all things gardening."

It isn't surprising Cochran would find her way to the University of Minnesota Crookston to major in horticulture. "I started out in a different major at another school that took me through Crookston on my drive home to Sebeka," Cochran says. "I couldn't help but notice the beautiful gardens when I drove by this campus.

"It was something of surprise for me to find that one of the best and only horticulture programs was available right there, and when I discovered it, I made the decision to transfer," she says.

Last summer, Cochran applied for an internship with Parks and Recreation in Crookston and landed a job on the flower crew working for Scott Riopelle and Tom Clauson. What was unique about Cochran's internship was an opportunity to design, plant, and care for new beds that were to be located at the entrance to Central Park (In photo at right).

She incorporated plans and ideas from Kristi Thorfinnson who served on the Crookston Area Chamber Beautification Committee, but because of a later start, some of the plants in the original design had to be substituted with what was available to Cochran at the time.



"I spent a day in D & D's Thomforde Garden Center in Crookston choosing plants for height and color, and I had a lot of help from Dawn, who really guided my decisions," she explains.

After setting aside her choices, she went back to Riopelle with her ideas. After approval to move forward, Cochran began the work of planting with help from the others on the flower crew. "We planted both sides of the entrance about 400 plants on each side," she recalls. "I placed the plants out for height and the location where they needed to go. Then, the four of us spent two mornings planting."



The beds included King Tut pampas grass, zinnias, flowering kale, and moss roses and Cochran says her favorite of them all was the flowering kale. "I like things that are a little unusual and the flowering kale did very well," she says. "I enjoyed incorporating it into the beds."

"The best part of working for the Parks and Rec Department was being outside with my hands in the soil," she smiles. "I took a lot of pride in the project and how it turned out."

And, it goes without saying there are several generations of women in her family, who feel a similar sense of pride in both Cochran and the beautiful gardens she designed.

Cochran hopes the future might find her living and working in the Pacific Northwest and maybe exploring viticulture, but for now, she is looking forward to her final semester of classes and maybe spending some quality time with a gardening catalog or two and conferring with her family on what to plant come spring.

The University of Minnesota Crookston now delivers 34 bachelor's degree programs, 22 minors, and 40 areas of emphasis on campus as well as 14 degree programs entirely online. These degrees are offered in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,800 undergraduates from more than 20 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu.

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