Josh Chase Memorial Shed at Wilmot Botanical Garden

Grant Proposal Submitted to Rotary District 6970

Name of Submitting Club: Rotary Club of Gainesville Sunrise

Date: April 26, 2025

**Benefiting Non-profit Organization:** Wilmot Botanical Gardens, 2023 Mowry Road, PO Box 103560, Gainesville, Fl 32610. Funds are to be received through the UF Foundation Tax ID/EIN 59-0974739.

**Mission:** Wilmot Botanical Gardens is dedicated to advancing patient care, research and education through its vibrant and growing therapeutic horticulture program. The gardens provide peaceful and verdant respite for patients, faculty, staff, and the public who utilize UFHealth.

**History:** Wilmot Botanical Gardens covers a 4.8-acres area located on the medical campus of UF Health at the University of Florida. The garden was planted in the early 1950’s to honor Royal James “Roy” Wilmot, an internationally recognized horticulturist. Regrettably, interest in maintaining the gardens waned and their very existence was threatened with expansion of facilities on the adjacent UF medical campus. In 2006, a major volunteer effort, organized by a retired former Dean of the College of Medicine, was initiated to restore the garden to its previous beauty and use. Since 2010 eight specialty gardens and a 2,700-foot greenhouse have been created within this botanical garden, all funded by donations and a large cadre of volunteers. Currently, the Wilmot Botanical Gardens welcomes hundreds of visitors each year. Most importantly, most of them are patients from the nearby cancer hospital, and the gardens provide a peaceful, quiet and therapeutic place to rest.

**Need:** The garden was finally able in January of 2025 to hire a staff director (relieving the former volunteer director since 2006). Since most labor is by volunteers, the garden has a critical need for a storage shed to store the tools and supplies to maintain the several gardens within the complex. It is estimated the shed will cost $12,000 which includes $5000 for the materials and $7,000 for labor. A photo of the shed is attached.

**Funding:** In 2024, Josh Chase, a long-time and active club member, passed away. The Rotary Club of Gainesville Sunrise was given $3,350 by Josh’s friends, club members and family to sponsor a memorial in Josh’s memory.

Sunrise Rotary proposes to use this $3,350, plus $2,650 of available club funds for the project. We are asking for $6,000 as a match from Rotary District 6970 to complete the total $12,000 needed for the project.

**Who will Benefit:** The location of the gardens adjacent to the UF Health Shands Medical Plaza with 40 specialty clinics serving 182,000 patients yearly and the Davis Cancer Pavilion that on average treats 25,500 patients yearly, along with their accompanying family members and friends, represents a major source of visitors to the gardens. In addition, the gardens host UF physicians, residents in training, medical students, nurses support staff, UF horticultural therapists and others interested in horticulture. Usage may be arranged for daily or weekly schedules. Thus, the gardens, also open to the public, are open daily from dawn to dusk, to serve the needs of many individuals. They provide a welcoming and visually stimulating environment with ample seating that encourages private, contemplative thought in a secure, serene and nature-oriented space. In short, visitors can experience first-hand the healing power of nature.

**Meeting Rotary Goals:** The goal of Rotary International is to improve lives and create a better world for tomorrow. Rotary has six areas of focus to that end, promoting peace, fighting disease, providing clean water, saving mothers and children, supporting education, and growing local economies. Gardens aid the healing of patients emerging from diseases and will impact human health in general. Further, the gardens provide a great opportunity for educating citizens about plant health, garden design, and most prominently the environmental services of naturel ecosystems. A signal benefit besides enriching the community, the addition of the shed and dedicating workdays to the Garden gives Sunrise Rotary a way to honor the late Rotarian Josh Chase who was always first to step forward on any hands-on Rotary project.

**Rotary Recognition:** The Garden Shed will carry a sign that states: Josh Chase Shed, Wilmot Botanical Gardens, provided as a memorial by the Rotary Club of Gainesville, SUNRISE.

**Other Activities:** In the Fall of 2025, SUNRISE members will be holding a work party at Wilmot Botanical Gardens and hold a dedication ceremony for the Josh Chase Shed. The shed will be built in Cape Cod style, further remembering Josh who spent summers with family on Cape Cod in Massachusetts. We anticipate holding volunteer work parties on a recurring basis as needed by the Garden. We will also schedule a club program by the Garden Director prior to the dedication of the shed and work party.