

# Monarch

From A1

“It was also a good learning experience because we used the project in biology class to discuss ecosystems and habitat destruction.”

At the end of March, a crew of VALE students headed out to the Pines and got to work.

With Newman as their “foreman,” the students stripped the grass, turned the soil, planted some perennial rootstocks and annual seeds and then added mulch. In just a month they had created a 20-by-8-foot garden. Around the same time, students also started work on a butterfly garden located at the high school, just below the window of the multipurpose room.

A group of students met with the Valparaiso Horticulture Department to pick up seeds donated by the city, and two students created informational posters detailing the migration, life cycle and habitat needs of monarchs. All told, about 25 of VALE’s estimated 120 students were involved in the project.

Leif Doolittle, a junior at VALE, said he enjoyed being able to work directly with the community. Volunteering is a big part of the school’s mission, and over the years the school has delivered for Meals on Wheels and volunteered at Hilltop Neighborhood House, Home Team Valpo, the Gabis Arboretum and Valpo Americans.

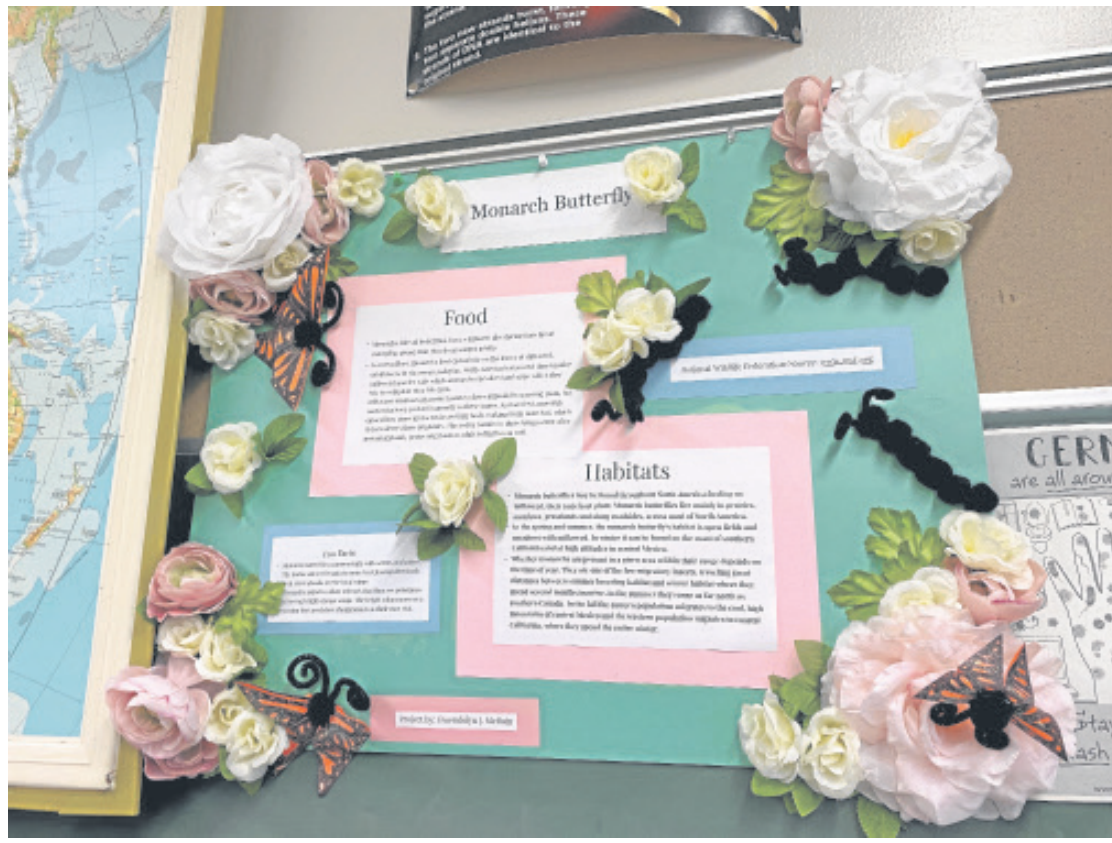
Hands-on activities help keep students engaged and ensure they “are doing more than just sitting in a chair,” Principal Mike Bendicsen explained.

“Being able to see the work they accomplished gives kids a sense of ownership in their community,” Bendicsen said. “The skills they learn on the job and that positivity and confidence then can transfer back to the classroom.”

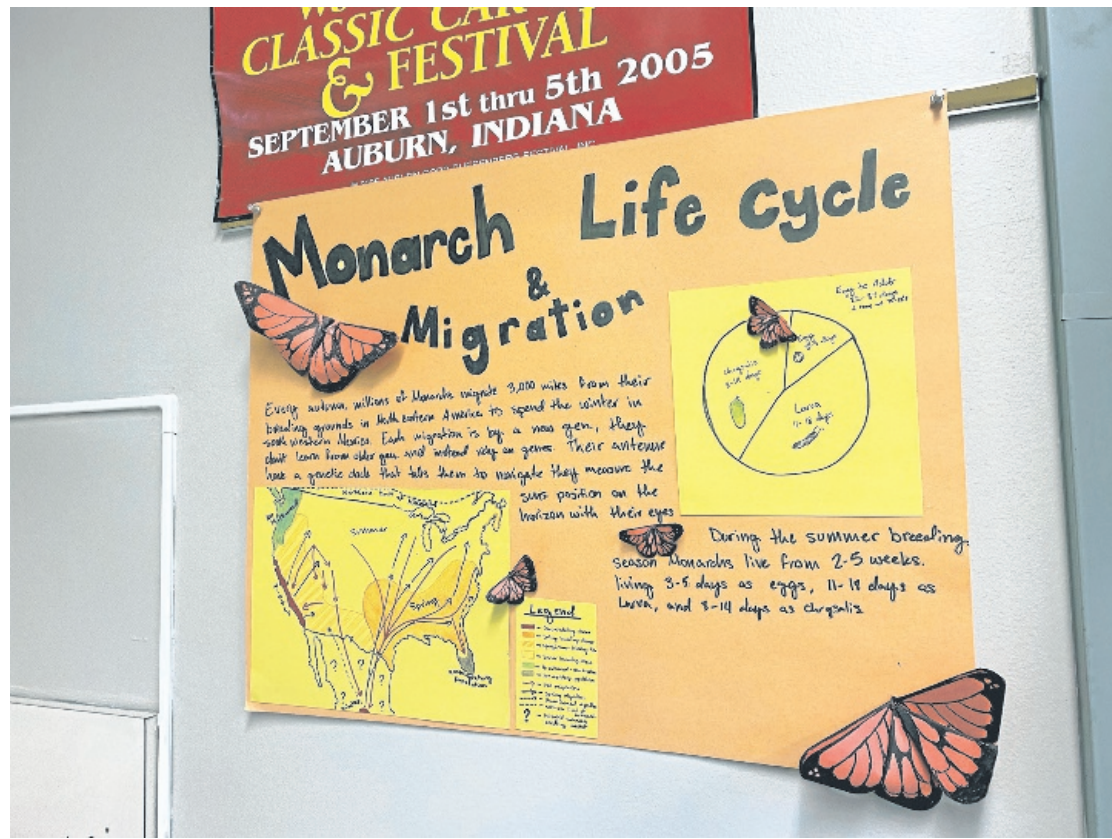
## Doing a lot with a little

VALE junior Dominic Murray was excited to work on the project because of his own landscaping experience. After learning more about monarch gardens, he wants to incorporate habitat restoration into his future career.

“I would love to go into landscaping and this [the gardens] was a step towards that,” Murray said. “What we have to understand is, insects play a very important role



A poster explaining the habitat and foods needed to sustain monarchs was created by the VALE junior Gwen McBain. The project was part of VALE high school’s monarch habitat restoration efforts.



Elliot Wise, a sophomore at VALE, created a poster explaining the monarch life cycle and migration.

in nature. Without bees we would not have honey and flowers would die.”

Working on the project was a bit of “a learning curve,” Bendicsen said. Both the faculty and the students discovered how important habitat restoration is in the face of plummeting monarch populations.

There are two populations of monarchs in North America: the eastern, which migrates to Mexico where it overwinters, and the western, which makes the trek to California. From 1996 to 2020, the eastern monarch population dropped 88%, from an estimated 383 million to just under 45 million. Since the 1980s, the western overwintering population has dropped more than 99%, from 4.5 million to 1,914 monarchs, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Monarchs are currently listed as a “candidate” for the endangered species list.

To survive the long migration, monarchs need frequent food and water sources as well as shelter. Shrubs and smaller trees make for the best habitat and milkweed and native wildflowers are the ideal butterfly food, Bendicsen said.

Using non-native grasses and pesticides to perfect a uniform lawn is harmful to butterflies, Leahy explained.

“People have created gorgeous yards and gorgeous gardens, but there is nothing left for the butterflies because the things we kill off as weeds are the things the butterflies need,” Leahy said. “Monarchs are an indicator species meaning they are the first species lost. If monarchs are gone, you can sense something is wrong. But if you can bring them back, that indicates you are doing something right.”

Bendicsen said “you don’t have to have a 500-acre field” to create an impactful monarch habitat. Replacing small strips of grass with native plants or adding milkweed to a backyard garden can still create a sort of ‘rest stop’ for the butterflies as they migrate.

VALE hopes to expand the Pines plot and have students maintain both gardens by watering and weeding them.

As more and more green buds begin to poke through the mulch, VALE students and migrating monarchs should be able to enjoy the fruits of their labor soon.



## Notice of Public Comment Opportunity USS Lead Superfund Site East Chicago, Indiana

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency invites public review and comment on two proposed administrative settlements and an explanation of significant differences concerning the U.S. Smelter and Lead Refinery, Inc., Superfund site in East Chicago, Indiana.

- **Prospective Purchaser Agreement, or PPA:** EPA proposes to enter a PPA with Industrial Development Advantage of East Chicago, LLC as purchaser of the former West Calumet Public Housing property. The PPA requires the purchaser to perform the cleanup on the purchased property, which is part of Zone 1 of the USS Lead Superfund site.
- **Administrative Settlement Agreement and Order on Consent, or ASAOC:** EPA proposes to enter into the ASAOC with the USS Lead Superfund site’s potentially responsible parties, or PRPs, as respondents. The ASAOC requires the respondents to provide financial assurance for the cleanup action to be performed by the purchaser of the former West Calumet Public Housing property under the PPA (as described above) and pay \$18 million in past response costs as well as costs to be incurred by EPA and the state of Indiana to oversee the cleanup and perform future response actions.
- **Explanation of Significant Differences, or ESD:** EPA proposes to issue an ESD for the former West Calumet Public Housing property. As required by the March 24, 2020, Record of Decision Amendment, the ESD will confirm that the conditions set forth in the Record of Decision Amendment have been met and that the selected remedy for Zone 1 is a commercial/industrial remedy.

Electronic copies of the PPA, ASAOC, and ESD are available for review online at: [www.epa.gov/uss-lead-superfund-site](http://www.epa.gov/uss-lead-superfund-site).

Hardcopies of all three documents are available for review at the East Chicago Public Library Main Branch, 2401 E. Columbus Dr., East Chicago, Indiana, and at the Robert A. Pastrick Branch Library, 1008 W. Chicago Ave., East Chicago, Indiana.

The 30-day public comment period for both proposed settlements and the ESD begins on May 4 and is open through June 3, 2022. Comments submitted online, by email, or by phone will be accepted any time during the comment period up to 11:59 pm on June 3. Comments submitted by mail must be postmarked no later than June 3.

### How to Submit Comments:

- Online:** Federal eRulemaking Portal [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)  
EPA Online Comment Form [www.epa.gov/uss-lead-superfund-site](http://www.epa.gov/uss-lead-superfund-site)
- Via Email:** [rodriguez.charles@epa.gov](mailto:rodriguez.charles@epa.gov)
- By Mail:** Charles Rodriguez, Community Involvement Coordinator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5  
77 W. Jackson Blvd. Mail Code RE-19J, Chicago, IL 60604
- By Phone:** 312-353-6284 (Leave a voice message after the prompt)

### Public Meeting and Hearing

A public meeting and hearing is scheduled for May 21, 2022, where EPA will answer questions regarding the proposed administrative settlements and the ESD. The public meeting and hearing will provide the public with an additional opportunity to comment on all three documents.

- Date:** May 21, 2022      **Time:** 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
- Venue:** Old Carrie Gosch School, Auditorium, 455 E. 148th St., East Chicago

For any questions regarding the proposed administrative settlements or the ESD, please contact:

- Thomas Alcamo**  
Remedial Project Manager  
US EPA Region 5  
77 West Jackson Boulevard (SR-6J)  
Chicago, IL 60604  
[alcamo.thomas@epa.gov](mailto:alcamo.thomas@epa.gov)
- Steven Kaiser**  
Associate Regional Counsel  
US EPA Region 5  
77 West Jackson Boulevard (C-13J)  
Chicago, IL 60604  
[kaiser.steven@epa.gov](mailto:kaiser.steven@epa.gov)