

## Member Spotlight

### Kim Lesperance Class of 2013



Three months after arrival into the world at Appleton Memorial, I was transplanted and grown in Texas. As a city girl, we had a couple of flower beds along the edge of the driveway. I had a three foot length of garden to call my own, but remember Mom really doing the work. Since we got to pick out which rose bush went into our section of garden, I chose the yellow rose of Texas. I have yet to grow another rose bush as my skill isn't as adept as Mom's and "Toto, I don't think we're in Texas anymore."

I migrated south to Corpus Christi as a young adult since it was too cold in the Dallas area. Those were great years. I could grow ANYTHING! Granted my plants were in containers, but my thumb was the greenest ever! I could put a dead plant out on the patio and a week later there would be little sprouts of green emerging. Only a couple of times during the nine years I lived there did I have to staple plastic sheeting around the patio due to freezing temperatures. I did rent a house or two while there so could expand past the container gardening. I even had a lantana BUSH – about four feet high! Needless to say every year I buy a lantana plant, knowing it is an annual in Wisconsin, just to rekindle a memory of those days.

I joined a bonsai club while in Corpus and learned I'm not a very patient person. I wanted my bonsai to be the right shape immediately after I put forth the effort of pruning and wiring. Bonsai tended to die in my care, which didn't nurture patience within me.

I transplanted myself to Ruidoso, New Mexico for a beautiful mountain experience. To start, the house was a cabin get-away for the original owners so there was a floor of pine needles compared to a lawn with flower or vegetable beds. I started with a few plants and small flower beds to test the waters of the area. The red hot poker, *Kniphofia*, was my favorite for the wonderful bloom it produced.

Squirrels weren't a problem like here in Appleton, but I had deer nibbling on a plant or two and once an elk strolled through. The bears that did venture down the mountain were more concerned about what may be in the dumpsters. They didn't see a problem in parking their large carcass on

my plants while chowing down on a McDonald's burger found while dumpster diving. Hummingbirds, scrub jays and Stellar jays were in abundance. I did learn patience while hand feeding peanuts to scrub jays. They would then flit to the yard, bury it and come back for more. The Stellar jays would observe from a tree and wait for an opportunity to grab the hidden treasure. And hummingbirds were *quite* plentiful. In July the Rufus hummingbird would come to town and was more aggressive. One didn't





even think of coming between them and the feeders for fear of being dive bombed. In Wisconsin, it is a blessing to see one or two.

1998 replanted me in Wisconsin now a block from where I was born. Gardening was even more challenging here as the outdoor growing season is almost non-existent compared to Texas or New Mexico. I fondly remember Gramma's gardens when we'd visit from Texas. She had berries, veggies and wonderful flower gardens. Fortunately, a couple of my cousins grew up here learning at the hand of a master. I stumbled upon the master gardeners at the Appleton Farmer Market and received information about the course. OH MY!! Not only was I taught the guidelines for gardening in this area, but met so many folks with varying degrees of knowledge. JACKPOT!!

To support my gardening interest, my other creative hobbies and to provide a roof over my head, I completed my accounting degree in Corpus Christi and passed two parts of the CPA exam. Then I decided the accountant attire is a bit stodgy so opted to venture out west instead of completing the CPA certification.

In Ruidoso, I was fortunate to co-own my own print shop and learned printing and computer graphics. Then while chatting with a cousin in Wisconsin, it sounded like the snowfall in the mountains was comparable to Wisconsin. Little did I realize that mountain winters are quite a bit milder. Until moving here, I didn't realize that nose hairs really can freeze and gloves aren't an optional accessory.

In 2004 I married a Wisconsin artist who has no desire to relocate. Most in the area know our house by the large snow sculptures in the winter he creates. I am still conditioning myself to enjoy winters in the basement with a sewing machine, yarn and scrapbooking supplies (and many layers of clothes). Now I work in a real estate assessment office to support my habits as the graphic and accounting worlds are seeking fresher minds straight out of college.

I continue to share my joy of computer graphics with various volunteer groups in exchange for their knowledge and camaraderie. The Outagamie County Master Gardener Association has allowed me to be one of the editors of the quarterly newsletters as well as help with other printed pieces. OCMGA probably won't shake me until I drain each and every member of their gardening knowledge.

