

# Volunteer Spotlight

December 2016



## Kasia Bilhartz

Kasia has been a volunteer with the Family Relief Nursery (FRN) for almost two years, primarily as a horticultural therapist, but her involvement has grown exponentially with her creativity and unique skillset. In 2015, Kasia joined our team as part of a horticultural therapy internship through Legacy Health Systems Horticultural Therapy program. She intended to stay for 3-6 months, the typical internship duration, but she grew attached to the program and wanted to see it succeed beyond her tenure. She now has an expanded role of gardening (of course), maintaining a fresh water aquarium and houseplants, and her most recent project, introducing therapy rabbits!

Kasia has experienced many heartwarming moments at the FRN, but one that stands out is the classroom raptor visit she helped organize with a professional falconer. The children were enchanted by the beautiful birds, especially when a very large Eurasian Eagle Owl extended and flapped its wings. The kids even got to touch the owl, which was so special to witness.

One of the best learning experiences volunteering with us was implementing the garden re-design and update. There were many challenges the garden faced in fully thriving, and when given the opportunity, Kasia helped design a better functioning garden. This took a lot of time and patience, but with the support of staff, volunteers and donors, we were able to overcome obstacles and Kasia really put her educational training in real life action. It's so rewarding to see staff and kids now enjoying the garden for lunch, meetings, and relaxation.



Kasia is currently training a new garden volunteer and is excited for her to learn and hone in on her particular goals with great staff support. Kasia says she's been very fortunate to have been able to engage her specific skills, imagination and heart. And she's not leaving us, just onboarding new volunteers! We're so fortunate to work with Kasia! *Thank you for growing with us, Kasia!*