

# JULY 30, 2017 southeastern connecticut Business

M O N T H L Y



## SPRIGS & TWIGS CREATES LEARNING GARDEN FOR LOCAL PRESCHOOL

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### A recipe for small business success!

Start with a great product, add hard work and the right financial partner – and great things can happen! We are pleased to announce that Carla Bartolucci, President & CEO of Euro-USA Trading/Jovial Foods, has been named the U.S. Small Business Administration's 2017 Connecticut Small Business Person of the Year! We're extremely proud to have helped Carla grow her thriving company through our small business lending program!

Shown L-R: Carla Bartolucci; Kathryn Tracey, Pawcatuck Branch Manager; Mark Light, Vice President, Commercial Loan Officer.



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## Sprigs & Twigs develops learning garden for local preschool

By Karin Crompton

Even the most optimistic among us doesn't usually expect bolts of inspiration when attending continuing education classes.

Yet that's what happened for Bill Lillie, CEO of Sprigs & Twigs, while attending a conference during the landscaping business' offseason. Three lectures in particular resonated with him, he said, each of them dealing with how to appeal to the millennial generation.

"And I started thinking, 'Ok, if I want to preserve and strengthen my business for the next generation, I need to be focused on a different set of customers,'" Lillie said during a recent phone interview.

Over the winter, Lillie and his staff brainstormed a number of products and services they thought could work. Two things his company does especially well, Lillie said, are education and community service.

"Our people, up and down the line, are college-educated, know their fields and are experts in their own rights in what they do," Lillie said.

They decided to create a program for millennials' children that would educate them and get the kids out of the classroom. Or as a company description puts it, applying Sprigs & Twigs' "design skills to develop a sensory garden that emphasizes curiosity and multiple educational opportunities for children."

And when a local preschool contacted the company about installing a garden, Lillie had his location.

In June, Sprigs & Twigs partnered with First Leaps Together Preschool in Ledyard to create the Early Childhood Landscape Learning Initiative.

In short, Sprigs & Twigs planted a garden at the preschool and included the kids.

"Even if nothing came of it from a business point of view," Lillie said, "it sure would be fun to do."

Ashley Willis, a staff member at the landscaping company with a master's degree in Early Childhood Education, developed a classroom curriculum in parallel with the garden, and the space was mapped out by one of Sprigs & Twigs' expert landscape designers, Kristin Curran. The designer selected plants that look interesting year-round and hold multi-sensory appeal.

Curriculum ideas range from math concepts such as tracking the growth of plants or counting petals to social/emotional components that prompt discussion about how plants are the same or different, same as people. There are even a couple of recipes, for lavender play dough and for mud dough.

A student handbook titled "In Our Garden" identifies the various plants in

the garden and prompts children to identify what they see, hear, feel or smell in the garden today, how it makes them feel, and to chart the weather and their work.

The concept is scalable, Lillie said. So whether a Mom and Dad want to use one plant to teach their child or another school is interested in an entire sensory garden, the study guide can be used across a variety of scenarios.

All of the plants are safe to touch, nothing is poisonous, they are low maintenance, and even the rocks are safe to climb and sit on.

Over the two-day installation of the Toddler Garden in June, students were able to help with things like "spreading" the soil or mulch with their hands and learned about machinery and equipment.

"It was a moment," Lillie said. "I ac-

tually got choked up watching it. It was like, 'this is the coolest thing.'"

*Founded in 1997, Sprigs & Twigs is a 100% organic, national award-winning leader in the creation and care of beautiful outdoor living spaces. They are the repeat winners of "Best Landscape Company" and "Best Tree Service" by Day readers, specializing in custom carpentry, landscape design, installation, maintenance, expert tree care, organic lawn care, custom stonework and floral and decor. Visit [sprigsandtwigs.net](http://sprigsandtwigs.net) and [SprigsandTwigsFloral.com](http://SprigsandTwigsFloral.com) or call 860-235-0752 for more information.*

Below: Landscape designer Kristin Curran (in pink) explains what plants will be used in the garden to students at First Leaps Together Preschool in Ledyard.

