**JCMGA Volunteer Opportunity Spotlight: Earth Month Community Seedling Exchange**

By Yawntreshia Coleman

**In celebration of Earth Month, the Jefferson County Master Gardener Association partnered with the Birmingham Public Library - Southside Branch, Glen Iris Neighborhood Association, and the Birmingham Earth Coalition to host a seedling exchange on Saturday, April 1, 2023!**

This wonderful event brought gardening enthusiasts and poetry lovers together in celebration of Earth Month and National Poetry Month. The seedling exchange provided an opportunity for residents to acquire new seeds and seedlings for their gardens, promoting a sense of community and sustainable gardening practices.

The inclusion of two seed banks, the Friends of the Botanical Garden Library Seed Bank and the new Southside Branch Library Seed Bank, added diversity and variety to the available seeds, giving participants a wide selection to choose from. This emphasis on seed preservation and sharing is crucial for maintaining biodiversity and ensuring the availability of different plant varieties for future generations.

The presence of the Jefferson County Master Gardener Association added expertise to the event, with gardening demonstrations, kids seed starting zone with fun activities, and a hotline table where residents could seek advice and guidance on various gardening topics. MGs and Master Gardener Interns presented gardening demonstrations, coordinated a seedling station & a kids seed starting table, and manned the MG hotline table. This not only empowered attendees with knowledge but also fostered a sense of support and camaraderie among gardening enthusiasts.

The integration of poetry performances into the event added an artistic and creative touch. By incorporating poetry as a transition between the gardening demonstrations, the organizers highlighted the interconnectedness of nature, language, and human expression. One performing poet's reference to "planted words" beautifully symbolizes how poetry can take root and grow, just like seeds in a garden.

Overall, this event successfully blended gardening and poetry, promoting environmental awareness, community engagement, and artistic expression. It offered a unique and enriching experience for participants, encouraging them to nurture both their gardens and their love for literature.