

# Atria Darien Senior Living Joins the Pathway!

By Juliet Cain



**The Atria Senior Living facility in Darien recently reached out to the Darien Pollinator Pathway asking for help to create a pollinator garden.**

Darien Atria has a substantial internal courtyard, surrounded on all sides by the building itself and reachable only via the building. The courtyard is partly paved, with flower beds around the edges and mossy grass under some trees. This area is not treated with chemicals and has been left to residents and staff to tend. The Darien Pollinator Pathway agreed to help start the pollinator garden by planting in between the existing plants. If the natives are successful, Atria would like to expand the native planting area!

On a sunny September day, I gave a presentation to about a dozen residents. I talked, of course, about threats to pollinators, including pesticides, and the vital need for native plants to help stem the losses. I emphasized that by using natives and gardening to suit the planet rather than for ourselves, residents would be making a significant contribution to the health of our pollinators and the overall environment. Judging by the questions they asked and the interest they showed, it was clear that many residents were keen gardeners and energized by this approach.

After the talk we planted Anise Hyssop, Purple Coneflower, Solomon Seal and Butterfly Weed that I had brought with me. I gave them laminated cards with photos and information about the plants and a sample label for each plant type. I left the residents with labels and Sharpies so that they could create labels for all the plants and place them where we had planted. The residents' participation and the labels will make it easier for them to find the plants – and make sure not to weed them – in the Spring.

This small project demonstrates that there is much potential for enrichment of residents' lives by adding native plants and creating pesticide-free habitat at Atria and other facilities like it. The rewards – a beautiful landscape full of bees and butterflies for everyone to enjoy – will be worth the effort!