

The GroundBreaker

BREAKING NEWS FROM GROUNDWORK BRIDGEPORT

FALL 2004 EDITION

WE HAVE A NEW PHONE NUMBER!! → (203) 335-6126

The Walter's Project: Owning the Trees

The Walter's Project, a program designed to merge environmental education with community beautification, was a tremendous success this summer. Fifteen Birch, Maple, Ginkgo, and London plain trees were planted at Seaside Park and Old Mill Green. The children involved alternated between taking classes and fieldtrips, and planting trees. The boys and girls were able to integrate what they had learned in their classes about trees and how they benefit the environment with the hard work that goes into planting a tree. And these are no ordinary trees, standing upward of 15 feet and weighing around 500 pounds with root and bulb. After a little help, and a lot of sweat, the kids were fighting over whose tree was whose. The project was successful in not only teaching the kids about trees and the environment, but also in developing a sense of ownership for their community and environment.

BAT Spells Success

The Butterflies Are Teachers (BAT) program has proven itself to be a very successful program last school year. The BAT program utilized the lifecycle of butterflies to aid students in learning about science and math. This year, in addition to the five schools from last year, three new schools were introduced to the BAT program; High Horizons, Longfellow, and Louis Muniz Marin schools. There was also a special garden built at Harding High School, which was dedicated to William Peet (a longtime employee at Harding who took 3 sick days in 37 years). Under the leadership of Joe Lanier, the Harding students served as facilitators during

Upcoming Events

PARK CITY SWEEP

OCTOBER 16th

9:30 AM to 12:30 PM

COOKOUT to FOLLOW

This year's Fall Park City Sweep is looking to be better than ever. The Fall Sweep is a day-long project involving community groups across Bridgeport working together to continue to build neighborhood pride while cleaning up and beautifying their neighborhoods. We are expecting a record number of volunteers, So come out and volunteer! Contact: Dave Vosburg at 335-6126, parkcitysweep@sbcglobal.net

the construction of the gardens. The program has challenged Harding students to develop and improve their leadership and mentoring skills. John Garcia (a Harding student) was surprised at how well the elementary students responded and respected their leadership. "They called me Mr. Garcia!" he said in surprise. Because of the outstanding success of the BAT program, a new garden will be built at Multicultural, the program will be implemented at the local YMCA as an after school program, and this coming year will see two new schools and many more classrooms adopting the BAT project.

New Staff Profile: B. Dave Vosburg

Community Organizer and Team Builder

Mr. Vosburg is a recent graduate of the University of Notre Dame with a degree in Political Science and a minor in Peace Studies. Dave is a Jesuit Volunteer in Bridgeport, and will be with Groundwork Bridgeport until August of 2005. While at Notre Dame, Dave co-founded and organized two projects of interest; 'Turning Over a New Leaf,' a project constructed of approximately 90 students raking over 40 yards of elderly and disabled, and 'Green Impact,' over



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one hundred students planting 15 trees and over 400 flowers. Dave is excited to work at Groundwork this year with the hope that he can both help to create new project initiatives and add to the energy at Groundwork. His community organizing skills will be of great value in recruiting new BAT volunteers and assisting the Project Manager on all aspects of the BAT garden project. Dave is one of four Jesuit Volunteers in Bridgeport this year, Sarah Holtz is a case manager at Prospect House, Joseph Wysocki is teaching at Kolbe Cathedral High School, and Sarah Postel is a youth organizer at RYASAP for the prevention of drug abuse.

Weeding Teaches Value of Hard Work: Summer BAT Program

Part of Groundwork's 'Butterflies are Teachers' (BAT) project requires the maintenance of multiple butterfly gardens at various elementary schools throughout Bridgeport. This maintenance, as Harding High-Schoolers have discovered, is hard work. Select high school students maintain the butterfly gardens they have helped create. This provides them with both valuable job training and an income. Unfortunately, the majority of the butterfly garden maintenance consists of weeding; a word that every child and teenager dreads. At first reluctant to weed for an entire summer, the students are now amazed at the difference they have made to the gardens and the surrounding neighborhood. Their hard labor has paid off and they can now enjoy the fruits; their work has helped to beautify an urban landscape that hundreds of people will enjoy. The summer BAT program has been a success, but needs funding if it is to reach every school and child.

Individual Self Sufficiency Program/Summer

This is a new program geared at grooming high school students for a career in landscape maintenance once they graduate from high school. The program will allow individuals to gain experience and develop critical skills needed in the job market. The idea is for interested participants to understand and practice the dynamics associated with having a successful career in landscaping. Thus while in high school they would have gained an immeasurable amount of experience in that field. Groundwork has already taken measures to ensure that once the students graduate, there will be opportunities for them to obtain employment by landscape maintenance companies in the area. Although the program is focused on high school students, there are opportunities available for postgraduates as well. Call for more information.