

Press Release



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Keep Akron Beautiful Completes Lowe's Community Partner Grant *Revitalization of Elaine Evan's Memorial Children's Garden Brings Neighbors Together*

Akron, Ohio (October 10, 2017)—Thanks to a \$10,000 grant, part of the 2017 Keep America Beautiful/ Lowe's Community Partners Grant Program, Keep Akron Beautiful (KAB) helped to fight illegal dumping through beautification and revitalization of the Elaine Evan's Memorial Children's Garden. Formerly known as the Children's Garden, the site was installed by Let's Grow Akron (LGA) in 1997 by founder, Elaine Evans with the help of Keep Akron Beautiful who helped eradicate a huge illegal dumpsite, making room for the installation of a man-made stream, a canal boat replica, an arbor and several flowerbeds. Twenty years after its installation, Keep Akron Beautiful identified a need to return to the site to help address the illegal dumping and drug related issues that affect the surrounding community at Summit Lake.

KAB worked with several volunteer groups, community organizations and vendor partners during the project. Work began in August, thanks to **the City of Akron** who performed maintenance to the road and installed new lighting making the park more accessible and safe for pedestrians and cyclists. **Advanced Arboriculture** of Norton, spent multiple days at the site to trim and remove dead trees, clearing overgrown brush, vines and poison ivy and remove a section of a mature willow tree. This helped increase the visibility of the park to the surrounding neighborhood while removing safety hazards, which was crucial for the volunteer groups that would follow. Next, **KGK Gardening and Design** donated a crew and equipment to excavate the man-made stream. By removing boulders, dirt, vegetation and the plastic lining beneath it, KGK created a space that would be easy to maintain. On September 10, KAB welcomed volunteers during **First Congregational Church of Hudson's First Serve** event. A group of 15 Hudson high school students visited the site to help stain the arbor, continue clearing brush and excavating the site. Not only did the First Serve volunteers donate their time and efforts, but also donated a dumpster for debris disposal and over 300 daffodil bulbs to plant later in the fall!

On September 14, KAB welcomed **OEC** volunteers as part of their **Community Connections Day**, a collaboration made possible by the **BVU: The Center for Nonprofit Excellence**. Volunteers worked with KAB and LGA to remove fencing, stones from old flowerbeds, and sod from a new flowerbed. Volunteers from **Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company**, under the leadership of KAB Board Member, Chastity Duskey, continued the work on new bed installation, removing more sod, tilling in compost and edging the beds with rocks repurposed from the man-made

stream. Goodyear volunteers also stained four picnic tables donated by Lowes. Crew members from Advanced Arboriculture returned to the site to install new fencing.

From October 3-6, **The Lowe's Heroes** team from the Fairlawn Store, under the leadership of Store Manager, Gary Sutor, began to renovate the canal boat replica, removing the flooring, benches and other places where the wood had deteriorated, installing new flooring and benching in its place. They will return in the spring to repaint the canal boat replica once the lumber has had a chance to weather, which prevents the paint from peeling. Lowes also installed pollinator gardens under the supervision of KAB Flowerscape Director, Leah Heiser.

KAB worked closely with Lets Grow Akron Executive Director, Lisa Nunn, to ensure the plant selection and changes to the park stay true to both Elaine Evans vision of the Children's Garden and with the current goals of LGA. Staff and volunteers from LGA will worked side by side with volunteers and KAB staff throughout the projects entirety. Keep Akron Beautiful is pleased to know that through 2017 Keep America Beautiful/ Lowe's Community Partners Grant Program, they were able to build stronger communities via the revitalization of the Elaine Evan's Memorial Children's Garden by helping to beautify public spaces, reduce illegal dumping and strengthen relationships with members of the community.

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