

September 26, 2017

For Immediate Release



Contact: Jacqui Ricchiuti
330-375-2116

jricchiuti@akronohio.gov

Keep Akron Beautiful Honors Former Flowerscape Director, Polly Kaczmarek

The beautification and litter prevention nonprofit agency honors their first Flowerscape Director, now retired, through a naming dedication of the well-known garden at Alexander Park, off West Market Street.

Akron, Ohio – On the morning of September 25, 2017, the Keep Akron Beautiful organization dedicated a Flowerscape to recognize and thank the special person who began their Flowerscape program, alongside first Executive Director, Judy Isroff, and Board of Directors Member, Vince Lobello.

Polly Kaczmarek, the agency's 34-year Flowerscape Director who retired in 2016, always favored Alexander Park during her employment. The beautiful garden was a perfect place to try new and unusual flowers, but in addition, the site held a special place in Polly's heart, because it was where she married her husband, Jeff, in 2003. Fittingly, the exact location of the dedication sign is in the area where Polly's son, Jason Simmons, walked her down the aisle on her wedding day.

The park tells a history of the City of Akron, too. Previously called, Neptune Park, it was the first parcel of land bought by the city during the 1880s, according to the Akron-Summit County Library website Summit Memory at <http://summitmemory.org/cdm/ref/collection/art/id/47>. The website states that at that time, the park, located in the little triangle of land between Market, Valley, and North streets, served as a public gathering place for concerts. After a donation of a 15-ft. fountain in 1908 by J. Park Alexander, the developer of fire-resistant brick, who served on both served on the Akron City Council and Ohio legislature, Neptune Park was renamed Alexander Park. Yet the carvings of the Roman god Neptune at the base of the fountain stood as a reminder of its original name. Alexander's donated fountain stood in the park until 1920. In 2000, the park was restored, to include a replica of the original fountain. The restoration was achieved through community support during a fundraising campaign driven by Keep Akron Beautiful. The newly restored park subsequently was, and continues to be, maintained largely by the nonprofit agency, with occasional assistance from city departments. It is one of its most recognized gardens in the Keep Akron Beautiful Flowerscape program.

Speaking on the Flowerscape program, Polly remembers, "We started the Flowerscape program with eight beds, which were hand watered with watering cans, and later a sprayer tank." Since then, the program has grown to 39 beds, which touch just about every area of the City of Akron. "Thankfully, the Flowerscape crew doesn't water all the beds by hand any longer, since irrigation was later installed in all sites as the program grew."

Executive Director and CEO, Jacqui Ricchiuti said, "Polly's touch can be seen all over the City of Akron, and we are grateful for her leadership and dedication to the program. We thought installing a sign in her favorite Flowerscape would be the best way to share how important she was to the program and to us as an agency."

Since 1983, Kaczmarek's work has had a long lasting impact on not only the agency, but the City of Akron. The Flowerscape program has been considered a "model program" throughout the National Network, Keep America Beautiful, for many years. Keep America Beautiful, Inc. has awarded the agency the Presidents Circle Award annually since 2003, and the Flowerscape program has always been a large part of the award.

Keep Akron Beautiful would now like to say thank you to Polly Kaczmarek for her commitment to Keep Akron Beautiful, through the dedication of this Flowerscape.

About Keep Akron Beautiful

Keep Akron Beautiful is a 501(c)(3) agency in its 36th year of serving the community by improving Akron's quality of life through beautification and responsible environmental management. For additional program information, visit www.keepakronbeautiful.org.