

Volunteers help create Learning Landscape in Blissfield



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Cameron Lehr of Nativescape Native Ecosystem Restoration in Manchester and Brian Fish of Global Ethanol plant a tree Thursday for the Learning Landscape project located near Blissfield Community Schools.

BLISSFIELD, Mich. -

As part of a beautification and education effort in Blissfield, several people gathered Thursday to plant a Learning Landscape with species native to the area and also improve existing landscapes in the area.

At about 3 p.m. several people were starting to arrive at the landscape project, off Walnut Street near the drive to Blissfield Community Schools. There they would plant native items such as sweet black-eyed Susans, greenheaded coneflowers, ironweed and red twig dogwood.

Sue Hammersmith, president and chief executive officer of the Lenawee Community Foundation, said the project was part of an "Extreme Community Makeover."

The foundation provided a \$1,000 grant with a \$1,000 match from community. The Blissfield Foundation for Educational Excellence and Blissfield Rotary each donated \$1,000.

Jen Loar, a member of the Blissfield Chamber of Commerce's infrastructure and sustainability committee, said it has been the committee's vision for awhile to do something to improve the River Raisin.

About 10 employees from Loar's place of employment, Global Ethanol, and some committee members were set to help plant items for the project.

Chris Lehr, president and owner of Manchester-based Nativescape LLC, which specializes in native ecosystem restoration, supplied the plants for the project.

Lehr said it's a demonstration site showing a more traditional landscape with native flowers, plants, trees and shrubs. The Learning Landscape is also to highlight the entrance to the school and can provide an opportunity for an outdoor classroom.

"These types (of plants) are found along the river itself," he said. "All of these plants are attractive to wildlife, (including) hummingbirds and butterflies."

Before the end of the afternoon, volunteers had added 14 species of plants to the landscape. Lehr said the plants will bloom at different points of the season.

This type of landscaping can reduce maintenance and beautify a community, campus or business at the same time, he said. The Learning Landscape also doesn't need herbicides or pesticides. The project will serve as a learning tool, Loar said. Students can observe the different flowers and different types of wildlife it will attract.

Kay Brown, another infrastructure and sustainability committee member, said, "(The landscape) is beautiful today. It's going to be absolutely fantastic in two to three years."

Brown said the Learning Landscape consists of 300 plants.

The volunteers "really accomplished a lot of good things," she said.

Besides working on the landscape project, landscaping work was completed in the morning on overgrown gardens outside the BELL Laboratory, which is connected to Blissfield Elementary School.

After planting the various species at the Learning Landscape, Brown said volunteers went to the Boundless Playground and cared for the Sensory Garden. While there, they added 36 plants to enhance the landscaping.

Brown said this is the first phase of their efforts to continue to work along the strip of the River Raisin in Blissfield.

"We think it's one of our biggest assets," she said.

Blissfield Landscape Volunteer Event Photos

