

News

River gets clean sweep

BY REBECCA KEISTER SUN CHRONICLE STAFF
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Rose MacDonald, left, of the SA Shaws and Maria Bennett of the Raynham Shaws from the Shaws Markets Volunteers rake along River Bank Road Near Willett School. (Staff photo by TOM MAGUIRE)

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ATTLEBORO - As Ben and Lucas Chomyszak pulled off their rain boots, and water came pouring out, the mud and dirt-soaked boys were all smiles.

"We cleaned so it won't be gross and disgusting," Ben Chomyszak said. "And so people will want to come."

The 9-year-old twin brothers were just two of several dozen city residents who turned out Saturday morning to help clean up the Ten Mile River.

Organized by the Friends of Attleboro Interested in Revitalization, which is known as FAIR, the event was meant to help clear the way for a walking path to compliment a citywide bike trail, which the group got going last year.

And while it was partly playtime for the Chomyszak boys - who enjoyed getting into the water and getting dirty with their father's permission - it was an important part of the FAIR group's efforts to get the city's resources public ready in anticipation of the June opening for the river walk.

"I just can't get over the turnout," said Linda Alger, who headed up the effort. "It's little steps, and eventually we'll get everything to connect. It was excellent today."

In all, about 75 people showed up to help, including volunteers from Attleboro High School, Shaw's Supermarket, Mayor Kevin Dumas and city Councilors Brian Kirby and Barry LaCasse.

The group went from the river's edge on Cliff Street and followed through its path, collecting some 50 bags of trash, getting chest-deep in the muck and ridding the river of coffee cups, dead fish, discarded lumber and other unsightly items.

"We were able to tackle a huge amount of area," Alger said. "We just want to make it more pleasing for the walkers."

Ari Gonzalez, a Briarwood Drive resident, keeps a garden in the Attleboro Land Trust's public space, and has long noticed the river's poor condition.

He said he read about the cleanup effort in The Sun Chronicle, and decided to come down and help out.

"When you see something, you know you can't do it alone, when the problem is so big," he said. "This was perfect. It's a nice-looking river, and it's a shame that it goes to waste."

FAIR helped city residents take an inaugural ride around its recently opened bike path - which it hopes eventually will have an interstate connection - last September.

Next up is the inaugural walk, scheduled for Saturday, June 2. Alger hopes the National Park Service will that day designate the Balfour River Park as a National Trail.

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