

Neville Green gearing up for annual spring efforts

Each year on the Saturday closest to Earth Day, volunteers carrying trash bags and wearing fluorescent vests head out to Grand Avenue on Neville Island with the goal of picking up trash along the island's main thoroughfare.

The not-so-random act of kindness takes place as volunteers across the region are heading out to do the same in their own communities. On Neville Island, however, the initiative is one of several such efforts organized by a nearly 30-year-old organization known as Neville Green.

Each May, Neville Green volunteers also plant upwards of 3,200 flowers in beds adjacent to the off-ramp from I-79 and the Neville Island welcome sign next to the Coraopolis Bridge. They maintain 32 planters across the island and, in 2018, coordinated a massive project with Tree Pittsburgh and PennDOT that entailed planting 79 trees on PennDOT property adjacent to the I-79 bridge.

From 2003 to 2009, the organization also operated a naturalist program to teach area youth about the environment. Around the holidays, Neville Green volunteers place luminaries along Grand Avenue. They've also worked on Neville Island Cemetery and, since 2011, awarded scholarships to young people to encourage them to do volunteer work.

"Our goal is to enhance the environment by creating green space wherever possible on Neville Island," says Dorothy Antonelli, president of Neville Green.

This spring, the organization will be back at it. On April 25, volunteers will once again fan out to clean up Grand Avenue. Anyone interested in pitching in should visit www.nevillegreen.org. Neville Green supplies the necessary trash bags, gloves and vests, as well as coffee, donuts and water. Neville Township will be providing assistance as well.

Antonelli says that, while a dedicated core group of individuals organize Neville Green's various initiatives, there's no way it could exist without the Neville Island residents and businesses that support it. Both provide the group not only with financial support but also volunteers. Those island businesses take part in the cleanup day on their own premises as well.

Businesses that have contributed to Neville Green's efforts in the past include FedEx Ground, Carmeuse, Metallico, Neville Aggregates, WK Merriman, XPO Logistics, the Fairmont Fairfield Inn and others. In 1998, the organization received the Three Rivers Environmental Award, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and Duquesne Light Company, for its work with industry.

Mary Ann Merriman, president of WK Merriman, says that she's been impressed with the transformation of the island's appearance in the years that Neville Green's efforts have taken place. She and her husband moved their business to Neville Township in 1995 and she attributes the pride that's been taking place in the appearance of the island - which has long been known as a hub of industry - to the organization.

Merriman says her employees regularly pitch in on Neville Green's efforts and that she personally helps plant flowers in the spring. Now, she even invites customers for lunch on a grassy area



Some of Neville Green's projects include planting flowers in a bed adjacent to the I-79 off-ramp (above) and in a rotunda at the intersection of Neville Road and Grand Avenue (below). PHOTOS BY VICTORIA FIEDLER

overlooking the river on their property.

"Neville Green has worked really tenaciously to enhance the island," says Merriman. "I have been really impressed with what they have accomplished."



Thanks to the support its efforts receive, Neville Green has also enjoyed a rather long existence. In two years, it will turn 30. Antonelli says the organization was started in 1992 by Neville Island resident Eileen Boyd Hutchinson after she moved to the island and saw a need to enhance its residential area.

Hutchinson, says Antonelli, was also keen on education and volunteer work, which was what prompted it to start its naturalist and scholarship programs. Now, to be considered for the Eileen Boyd Hutchinson Scholarship, a student must be a graduating senior residing on Neville Island with post-secondary plans. They must also volunteer at least 20 hours and submit an essay about the importance of volunteering.

Antonelli says that, in one essay that still stands out to her, a student wrote how volunteering had helped them just as much as those who they were helping.

"I think that's a very good quote because it does help your community," she says. "The people who get these scholarships, they will continue to volunteer their work to their community."

Anyone who would like to contribute to Neville Green's efforts, either through volunteer work or a financial donation, should visit www.nevillegreen.org. Information about the Eileen Boyd Hutchinson Scholarship is also posted on the website.

Volunteers help Neville Green, PennDOT and Tree Pittsburgh plant 79 trees on the island near the I-79 bridge. PHOTO SUBMITTED

