

Features

Rain garden, interpretive trail emphasize the natural side of New Troy

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NEW TROY — Friends of New Troy President Terry Hanover is helping to make the New Troy Community Center the “Center of the World” when it comes to local conservation efforts.

A rain garden that utilizes about a third of the runoff from the 12,000-square-foot roof of the adjacent Community Center has been developed over the last month or so, thanks to a grant from American Electric Power and the efforts of Krumrie Construction’s David Krumrie, Peg Kohring of The Conservation Fund, and a host of volunteers.



David Krumrie (center) talks about the recently established rain garden at the New Troy Community Center on July 27.

“You’re taking water from a 12,000-square-foot roof and redirecting only some of it to a garden,” Hanover said. “That’s a lot of water — well more than we need. So we took about a third of it and are able to regulate it to not flood ourselves out.”

Kohring, Krumrie and Chris Martin of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission led a tour of the rain garden on July 27, describing some of the native plants such as coneflowers and cardinal plants that are taking root at the site. Krumrie said some of the rain garden plants will grow to six feet in height, and many butterflies should be attracted to it.

An interpretive trail also is being developed behind the Community Center, complete with an “outdoor classroom” area highlighted by a climbable box elder tree and, eventually, signs identifying the 14 or so different trees (everything from white oak and Norway spruce to slippery elm) that grow along the path.

“Even for me to identify a tree is difficult, and I’m a woodworker,” Hanover said.

He said a brochure describing plant life along the trail also is planned.

Hanover said the “very short trail (he figures a bit more than an eighth of a mile in length) begins near the rain garden and Berrien County Headstart playground — an area he described as “a pleasant place to have a picnic right underneath the giant white oak tree.”

When it comes to children attending the Headstart program that calls the New Troy Community Center home during the school year, Hanover said the rain garden and trail encourage a “no child left indoors” concept.

“The rain garden shows you so many different flowers right at the beginning ... and you’re able to see the bees and the butterflies,” he said. “For a young child, and some older people, it’s going to be quite an education.

The long-range plan is to connect the rain garden and trail system to a longer trail that will lead to a boardwalk across the adjacent wetland. From there, hikers will be able to journey all the way to Weesaw Township’s Mill Road park, which features an historic “camel-back” bridge and access to the Galien River.

“It’s the only place on the Galien River where you can catch a fish, cook it and eat it right there,” he said.

Hanover said the marsh between an eight-acre parcel of land next to the Community Center owned by the township and the river-front park has been put into a Chikaming Open Lands conservation easement by its owners, Ravi Ricker and Cheryl Noel.

"They agreed at that time that a boardwalk would be acceptable," he said.

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