

Partnership gets going on efforts to better area

The Greater Hazleton Civic Partnership certainly has gotten off to a fast start.

Though the group, relatively speaking, is still in its infancy, it already has several projects on which to hang its wide-brimmed hat.

There was the community survey done by internationally famous pollster John Zogby that carefully and cleverly laid out the Hazleton area's problems and a host of solutions. There was the Top of the Mountain presentation, at which Zogby formally presented his findings to a packed room of enthusiastic community leaders.

And there have been several smaller projects lately, like the Paint the Town Red, White and Blue event, which aimed to improve community spirit through a vivid display of colors.

More good news for the group came Monday morning, when the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation awarded the partnership, through the Mountain Council of Governments, a \$90,000 grant to beautify one of the region's main entryways.

The money will be used to spruce up the area around Route 924 near where it intersects with Interstate 81. With the state's money, the partnership will plant trees, shrubs and flowers where there now is just a wide, grassy median. The goal is make the area an attractive welcome mat for those visiting from other parts.

"We hope this project can be a first step in creating a long-range beautification plan for the community, and that it will serve as a model for other communities throughout the region and the commonwealth," said Lena Kotansky, the partnership's executive director. "A more attractive gateway will provide a more accurate reflection of the community that lies ahead."

So far, the partnership has been right on track with its efforts to better the area.

We're confident the beautification project will be another step toward putting a better face on the Hazleton-area community.