

# He's proud to 'paint' this town

■ One of the participants in Saturday's 'Paint Our Town Red, White and Blue' project recalled how things weren't as nice where he used to live.

By KENT JACKSON  
Standard-Speaker

Sometimes, your environment affects your personality, Michael Windley said as he stood by a flower garden that he dug next to a monument in Hazleton's Memorial Park.

With a shovel too small for his lanky frame, Windley overturned the soil where other students planted flowers on Saturday for the "Paint Our Town Red, White and Blue" project.

Planting flowers in colors that match the project brightens the park and the people who pass by.

"I think planting flowers builds the desire to keep the environment clean. When you're around a clean environment, it makes you want to be clean. You find yourself sweeping the front of the house more. The people are always sweeping," said Windley, sharing one observation he made when moving to the area from Baltimore to study at the Keystone Job Corps Center.



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ELLEN O'CONNELL/Standard-Speaker  
Twelve-year-old Becky Rabbitz, a member of Junior Girl Scout Troop 218 of Hazleton, plants red, white and blue flowers around Memorial Park Saturday morning.

During his first nights at Keystone, he couldn't sleep because sirens weren't blaring in the background as he was accustomed to in Baltimore.

The streets weren't just quieter, they were safer, Windley said, and people didn't need to act tough to survive.

"If you're in a hostile environment, you don't want to make yourself an object of ridicule," he

said. You don't act quiet and polite for fear manners will be mistaken as weakness.

Yet, Windley said, when someone from the city makes money, they try to create a nicer place for themselves.

They do things like plant flowers.

"Everybody loves to plant

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## Project

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flowers. I think that's deep down, God-given," he said.

The scene at the park bore him out as gardeners of all sizes prodded dirt with trowels, sprinkled water and spread topsoil around begonias, ageratums, impatiens and petunias.

Even standing up, Katie Kadelak barely reached the shoulders of students like Katie Wontroba who kneeled while planting flowers in front of a ship's anchor.

"You're Katie? I'm Katie too. We're twins," the taller Katie said. "You want to help plant flowers?"

She did, and she placed a white flower in the row where Keystone students arranged red and blue flowers around it.

Liquid fertilizer muddied the topsoil that Dawn Finnimore patted around the new plants. She rinsed her hands from a jug and let the water rain down on the flowers.

The park cleaned up as fast as her palms.

"This gives the park some life," Marie Beattie said after she finished planting and others hung bows of red, white and blue on the iron railing surrounding the park's tallest monument.

The bows line the railings of the front entrance to City Hall, too, where Eileen Whitaker of the city's shade tree commission, Pat Matteo and Penny Cannella decorated before helping at the park.

Above their work, a red, white and blue bunting hung from the balcony over the front doors.