

Civic partnership's red, white, blue project has special meaning this year

By **JIM DINO**

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Those red, white and blue bows you see around during summer months traditionally come down right after Labor Day.

This year, that was very unfortunate timing.

The Paint The Town Red, White and Blue campaign was begun by the Greater Hazleton

Civic Partnership during 2000, as a way for Hazleton-area residents to show community pride.

After having been successful in other communities, the Partnership adopted the program to tie red, white and blue bows, and plant red, white and blue flowers, all

over the area.

The original campaign ended Labor Day 2000.

This year was supposed to be the same, but getting the bows down lagged behind a few days – to Sept. 10.

Alice Kender, executive

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director of the Hazleton Chapter of Volunteers, said as more people were looking for bows after the Sept. 11 tragedy – but she found a lot of them were taken down.

Unfortunately, Joseph Yannuzzi, of the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce, said the bows were taken down in Hazleton and West Hazleton Sept. 10 – the day before the tragedy.

But, Kender said she and volunteers from the Hazleton Area Volunteer Center put up 50 new bows, as well as planting 300 daffodil bulbs around City Hall, the Greater Hazleton Area Public Library and Hazleton Memorial Park, to remember those who lost their lives Sept. 11.

The bulbs were planted, and the bows put up, as a “Make A Difference Day” project Nov. 2 to 3.

Aside from the red, white and blue and the project to create a hiking and biking trail between Hazleton and Weatherly, the Greater Hazleton Civic Partnership is working on some other projects: a program to create scholarships to keep young people in the area, and to help the Friends of the Drums Creative Playground.

Bob Skulsky, the Partnership’s executive director, said the partnership’s scholarship committee has sent 163 letters to area business and industry asking for donations to the program, which is open to area students pursuing an education that will lead to a job in the Hazleton area.

“The committee will soon start targeting some of those sent the letters with personal visits to try to get pledges,” Skulsky said.

Skulsky said PPL has donated \$5,000, and UGI Gas Corp. has donated \$500 to the program.

The more sponsors that come forward, the more scholarships the program can award, Skulsky said.

Meanwhile, the Drums Creative Playground will be turned over to its group by the new owner of the Drums Elementary School.

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Meanwhile, the Drums Creative Playground will be turned over to its group by the new owner of the Drums Elementary School.

Barbara Franzosa, the spokesperson for Friends of the Drums Creative Playground, said all bidders for the school - where the playground is located - indicated before any bids were accepted by the Hazleton Area School Board they would each be willing to give the playground to the group.

"We were very heartened by that," Franzosa said.

Rex Bognet, Inc., was the successful bidder for the school, and Franzosa said he told her he would give the group the 1.02 acres the playground sits on, as well as grant an easement to get to it. Basketball courts near the playground will be used for parking, Franzosa said.

She also said students from the Keystone Job Corps Center in Drums have been recruited to help put a coat of sealer on the wooden structure that is the centerpiece of the facility. Skulsky said the National Guard could put in an access road.

Franzosa said the playground will not officially be turned over until January, when Bognet is expected to sign the contract with the Hazleton Area School Board. In the meantime, Franzosa said Bognet will be meeting the zoning and planning requirements he needs to meet, as he plans what he will do with the former school

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