

TOWN *Reminder*

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Success grows in community garden

By KRISTIN WILL
Turley Publications Reporter

SOUTH HADLEY - The seeds were sown and from them a community garden has grown.

Since its official July 12 start, the garden has generated a great deal of interest. Already, half of its available plots have been filled by hopeful gardeners.

"We're pleasantly surprised," said Linda Young, GRO clerk. "The interest is growing."

The Gardening and Resident Outreach (GRO) Community Garden Committee finally decided upon the garden's location as the town farm, adjacent to the town athletic field on Rt. 47.

Residents are able to purchase a plot of land 10 feet by 20 feet and plant whatever they wish, from flowers to vegetables to herbs.

A major feature which makes this South Hadley community garden unique is its handicap accessibility. GRO President Larry DuBois said one of GRO's initial goals was to provide such a service.

"We want to be all-inclusive," he said.

The group researched different methods of providing access to gardens to those who are wheelchair bound. They are currently implementing one of those methods, which involves planting seeds inside bales of hay. The bales add height to the gar-



TURLEY PUBLICATIONS PHOTO BY KRISTIN WILL

President Larry Dubois relaxes in the garden while Clerk Linda Young and Treasurer Jennifer Grant pound a stake into the ground.

den beds, which makes tending to the plants growing inside easier for a person in a wheelchair.

The GRO committee is committed to the community. If the interest in the garden grows even faster than it already has and the amount of hopeful gardeners outnumbers the available plots, the committee said they are willing to give up their own plots to those interested.

"We are eco-friendly, believe in

ecology and protecting the environment and bringing the community together," Young said.

The community garden has truly been a community effort. Department Public Works (DPW) Superintendent Jim Reidy brought in compost for GRO to use. Bill Simard of the Parks Division of the DPW donated the fencing around the former pool area at Buttery Brook, which was being torn

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Plan for middle school parking lot approved

By ALEX ROSS
Turley Correspondent

SOUTH HADLEY - Plans for a new parking lot and driveway at the town's middle school were unveiled and unanimously approved by the town planning board at a July 14 public hearing.

The project, which will receive \$100,000 as agreed to at the June town meeting, will be constructed on the sloping western side of the Michael E. Smith Middle School at 100 Moiser St., and consist of 22 parking spaces for faculty parking, including three handicapped parking spaces.

This, according to Superintendent Gus Sayer, will allow for a drop-off area to be constructed in the current parking lot on the east side of the school, where parents can drop off their children, remedying current worries over heavy traffic and student safety.

"For several years we have been concerned about the congestion and safety issues of the children in the morning when students arrive, particularly at the start of the Middle School day," Sayer said. "Right now, the parking lot that is on the east side of the school is the faculty parking lot is quite crowded. There is never a spot not used there. So it's not possible

Please see PARKING LOT, page 7

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Many hands make much work light

'With His Hands' church receives new life

BY ELLIOTT BURKE
Turley Correspondent

SHUTESBURY- After years of sitting nearly dormant, the Federated Church of Shutesbury is bustling with activity once again.

These days there is a different congregation filling the old church on the weekends. Workers and volunteers are filling the pews of the sanctuary and crowding the common meeting room. They're stripping it of the old, worn out furnishings in order to give it a new look and hopefully restore it to its former glory, which includes bringing in new members. Dust and nostalgia float thick in the air as the workers remove the faded wallpaper, thread bare carpeting and tired, aged support beams, gradually replacing them with a fresh new face and renewed hope and promise.

The story of the Shutesbury Church is one of faith in action. From the humble beginnings of serving as a town meeting house, which would stand as a beacon on a hill, the church has weathered many a storm and age. Even before the existing structure was built, the local religious communities were without a place to meet for seven years until a group of Baptists, Congregationalists and Universalists merged together to build a common meetinghouse to be split between the three faiths. After some deliberation it was agreed that the new structure should be built in the center of the town, in accordance with New England tradition. The foundation was laid where it has stood on Town Common Road for 180 years.

Four years ago the congregation of the church had drastically dropped to only two members. The church has been hit hard by diminishing attendance and the economic support that comes from a thriving congregation. The structure of the building had grown weak, the steeple had started to lean and talk began circulating that the town was interested in using the building. At an August 2007 selectmen's meeting, the board discussed concerns about the deteriorating state of the church and whether it was serving a useful purpose to the community. Mary Dihlmann, one of the two remaining parishioners, told her friend Rev. John Blunt, the pastor of Valley Life Church in South Deerfield, about the problems the church has been going through. They both attended the meeting. While nothing significant was decided about the future of the church at that time, Blunt raised a call to action to members of the community and a small group of people began meeting each week at the church for bible studies, potluck meals, to watch films and for special holiday services. They've been meeting faithfully for the past two years, praying that some help would come.

That prayer was answered in the form of "With His Hands," a faith-based, non-profit ministry of Second Baptist Church of South Hadley. Rev. Pastor Donald Bradley and Outreach Minister James Sinclair of Belchertown told the group about the plight of the church in Shutesbury. The members of With His Hands acted without haste and took on the project, beginning work earlier this year. They estimate to be done by October.

A crew of about 60 volunteers gathered together on June 20 to clear out the old carpeting, strip the wall paper and scrape paint off of windows and doors while contractors of With His Hands Ministry worked on many of the trickier details of renovating the structure. They joined in a circle to pray before getting to work, and throughout the day there was plenty of good-natured joking among the noise and the sound of contemporary worship music played in the background. They all broke for meals together and shared in the satisfaction that their work is being accomplished to the greater purpose for the community of Shutesbury.

"We've all been blessed, incredibly, unbelievably blessed," said David Tetreault, board member and team leader of With His Hands Ministry. "Our mission is to give back to others this great blessing that we have received and to share with others who are in need [of] the love of Jesus."

With His Hands Ministry functions via a "pay it forward" principle of helping others.

"We don't want people to pay us back for the work we do," Tetreault said. "We'll supply as much of the labor and cost that we can for the work and we don't expect any compensation. What we desire to see is people being taken care of and in turn doing something to take care of others who need their help."

Linda Hanscom of Belchertown said she wants to see the building she grew up near restored. Hanscom was raised in Shutesbury and attended Sunday school and youth fellowship every Sunday with her sister and brother and continued to worship there as an adult.

"My mother served on numerous church boards and my father tended to the coal furnace on Sunday morn-



TURLEY PUBLICATIONS PHOTO BY ELLIOTT BURKE

With "His Hands," volunteers strip the walls and pews.

ings," Hanscom said. "My great-grandfather, Emmons J. Spear, was one of the members who drafted and signed a Certificate of Organization for the Church on March 18, 1903. How could I let him down?"

That hardly seems likely. Through her work on behalf of the church – from cleaning, preparing and repairing the building, providing a thumbnail history of the church that she typed herself, connecting members of the community with the leaders of the work crews and bringing the cause of the church to the attention of the media – Linda Hanscom is one of the many people making the work of rebuilding the church possible. She is one of the first people you meet when you arrive at the site as she welcomes you with a warm smile and introduces you to the others, showing you around the old church amid the bustle of activity going on. Her parents and grandparents would be proud.

"Church isn't just about having a place to meet," said Kathy Steve, daughter of Mary Dihlman. "It's

about community and taking care of one another. I grew up across the street from the church and was baptized here, and I've received so much from others who gave to the community through the church. There are members here who teach and work in the community. We all contribute our talents to the wellbeing of the town and the welfare of one another."

"We hope to develop a strong relationship between the church and the community," Hanscom said. "That's one of our goals, and we can't accomplish it without the help and support of others. We'd love to see it return to being a vital part of the town, and we are hopeful that once the project is complete that the town's people will be a part of the future of the church."

The next volunteer workdays scheduled for most Saturdays. People interested in volunteering can contact: With His Hands Ministry, c/o Second Baptist Church, 589 Granby Road, South Hadley, MA. 01075. Telephone: 536-0626 or visit withhishands.org.

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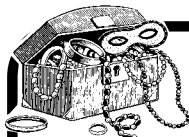


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PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Holy Spirit, You who made me see everything and showed me the way to reach my ideal. You, who gave me the divine gift to forgive and forget the wrong that is done to me and you, who are in all instances of my life with me. I, in this short dialogue want to thank you for everything and confirm once more that I never want to be separated from you no matter how great the material desire may be. I want to be with you and my loved ones in your perpetual glory. Amen. Thank you for your love towards me and my loved ones. Persons must pray the prayer three consecutive days without asking your wish. After third day wish will be granted no matter how difficult it may be. The promise to publish this dialogue as soon as this favor is granted. I will never stop trusting God and His power.
R.J.



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