

Earth Day spawns events to beautify Blackstone Valley

By: Nicole Dionne
Blackstone Valley Family

PAWTUCKET - With Earth Day approaching the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Keep America Beautiful and City Year of Rhode Island are in high gear setting up events in Pawtucket and throughout the Blackstone Valley.

Earth Day, which now takes place on April 22, was established in 1970 in San Francisco and other Northern California cities. The idea originated with John McConnell, who wrote a proposal to Peter Tamaris, who at the time headed the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. The proposal stated that Earth Day would be "a special day to remember Earth's tender seedlings of life and people; a day for planting trees and grass and flowers, for cleaning streams and wooded glens." Since that time Earth Day has become an international event that brings people together to give back to the Earth and to the communities they live

In the Blackstone Valley the biggest event planned so far is the Keep Our Neighborhood Beautiful event taking place in Pawtucket and Central Falls. The event will start at 9:30 a.m. on April 22 in the parking lot of C-Town located at 300 Barton St. in Pawtucket.

The event has brought together many different organizations including Americorps, City Year, the Boys & Girls Club of Pawtucket, Weed and Seed, GreenUp-CleanUp, the City of Pawtucket, the Neighborhood Alliance of Pawtucket, the Pawtucket Foundation, the Pawtucket Citizens Development Corporation, the LaFoyer Club, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Keep America Beautiful and the Woodlawn Community Center.

According to Abbey Wilson, the service director for City Year of Rhode Island, the event will include massive clean-ups throughout Pawtucket and Central Falls, painting and refurbishing of community based buildings, and gardening and tree planting at local parks and specifically at the corner of Barton and Dexter streets.

"In the past we've had a lot of different events," Wilson said. "But this year we thought we'd come together and have one huge event."

Kristin Zawistowski, the coordinator of Keep America Beautiful for the Blackstone Valley Tourism



Council, said that the event is part of Keep America Beautiful's Great American Cleanup.

"We've always been a part of the Great American Cleanup," Zawistowski said.

But recently the tourism council has been forging an affiliation with Keep America Beautiful that would help them utilize the group's knowledge and resources.

"We've been working with the cities and towns of the Blackstone Valley to get the affiliation going," she said. "We can use the resources they have, why reinvent the wheel, they've been around since 1953 so they've been doing something right."

In addition to the Keep Our Neighborhood Beautiful event area cities and towns will be holding

many other events in celebration of Earth Day.

On April 15 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. the Central Falls Parks and Recreation Department will hold an event at Jenk's Park and on April 22 a slew of events will take place.

From 9 a.m. to noon the Blackstone River Watershed Council will be holding an event at Manville Landing Park in Cumberland, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. East Providence will hold an event at City Hall (another will be held on April 29).

The Town of Lincoln will be holding an event at the Kelley House and Lincoln Woods (the time will soon be announced), and Slater Mill is hold an event from 8:30 to 11 a.m. at the mill.

Additionally the National Junior Honor Society from Lincoln Middle School will be cleaning up Cobble Hill Road and also cleaning from Lincoln Park to the North Providence border on April 1.

Wilson said that with events for Earth Day one goal the groups try to realize is to do something that will last.

"On this day we want projects that are both sustainable and transformative," she said. "We're doing clean ups but the trash will come back unless you do something sustainable."



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