

Extreme Makeover Topsfield Edition Press Release

Topsfield had a facelift. On June 16, the Topsfield Main Street Foundation sponsored what it hopes will be the 1st Annual Extreme Makeover Topsfield Edition. What began as a joke during a casual walking tour of downtown on a dreary February day transformed into a huge event that drew the attention of hundreds of residents throughout the day.

Extreme Team Members Paula Burke, Gretchen Rehak, Janet Kmetz and Kim Philpot were gathering ideas as they cruised along Main Street in late February when the inspiration to tackle many of the challenges at once set in. Because the planter sponsorship program had taken off during the fall membership campaign, they needed to find locations for new planters. As the tour continued, some spaces that could use some TLC or enhancements were identified.

Three of those sites were on town property. What became affectionately known as the “The John Nutter Pump” area is located at the southern end of town on the corner of Main and Park Streets. This inviting space seemed an ideal location for a picnic table and bench. At the opposite end of Main Street, they noted how the Town Events Sign Board should be more prominent. With just 2 planters flanking the information board, important messages seemed to get lost. The last site on town property was located not on Main Street but at the Steward School. Years ago, former 2nd grade teacher Heather Castonguay had requested a picnic table for the many staff members who enjoy eating outside during nice weather. That request evolved into an “oasis” where an entire class could go outside to enhance the learning experience. A pie-shaped area behind the school seemed the perfect space for this new learning center.

Three private properties were also included in Extreme Makeover Day. Ideas were offered by the Extreme Team, but it was the property owners’ responsibility to put the ideas into action. Topsfield House of Pizza was painted and beautiful window boxes were installed. In the Village Shopping Center, the large, circular planters were dressed up with lovely arrangements and a salvaged bike rack was restored to provide a place for the many youths who ride downtown daily. Finally, in front of the Keller Williams Realty Office, a beautiful patio was installed and served as the stage where Blues Catalyst entertained the crowd that gathered downtown on Makeover Day.

Among the notable folks who checked out Extreme Makeover Day were Selectmen Boyd Jackson and Steve Clark. School Committee member Jeanine Cunniff and her family biked around first thing in the morning to view the spaces “before” the makeover. She then attended the Dedication Ceremony that took place at Steward School on Monday when the “Oasis” was officially given to the Steward School Community. Superintendent Bernie Creeden and Principal Trudy Dooner (who had pitched in on Saturday) hosted the ceremony.

Many residents donated their time to make Extreme Makeover Topsfield Edition a success. The entire Main Street Board of Directors, which includes the Extreme Team mentioned earlier along with Janet Brown, Martha Morrison, Sandy Herrick, and Jan Ablon, was the driving force behind the project. Consultant Joan Panella helped to move several of the projects forward. Bob Winship made it possible for MRIP funds, earned by the town because of its impressive recycling rates, to fund the purchase of picnic tables and planters made out of recycled materials. Cheryl Stys assisted with the procurement of the picnic tables for Steward School and then photographed the Dedication Ceremony. Jerry Seaman volunteered his time to snap the before and after photographs. Boy Scout Bobby Feltault documented the entire event on video and has created a wonderful video presentation that will be shown on cable TV.

Local businesses pitched in also. Billy Quirici provided a wonderful buffet breakfast for the workers at the Daybreak Café. Chris Theodorou from the Topsfield House of Pizza served lunch. Jack at Dawson’s Hardware provided materials for the bike rack restoration project. Jan Dik at Edward Jones Investments, Scott MacDougall at Keller Williams Realty, and Sandy Herrick of the Gift Horse sponsored the beautiful blue T-shirts, which were custom designed by Bucko’s Outfitters.

The Park and Cemetery Department, led by Steve Shepard, was instrumental in bringing this vision to life. Paul and Pete were available all morning to assist with the heavy lifting and transporting of materials. The Fire Department helped to install brackets on telephone poles for new banners.

Judges for the day were Darcy Fulton and Morgan Lang who carefully evaluated the sites before and after the makeovers. Their thoughtful comments delivered during the awards ceremony at 4 PM outside of the library described the unique characteristics of each project. Darcy noted, for example, how the Nutter/Keliher Pump site was "not overdone". The addition of a picnic table and some barrel plantings were just the right combination to make that an inviting but easy to maintain space.

The following awards were presented by Town Administrator Ginna Wilder at the end of Makeover Day:

To the 4 participating sites-

First Place: Town Event Sign (plants by Terry Dwinell at Holiday Tree Farm and installation by Northshore Bobcat Services, Inc. of Danvers)

Judges' Award: Topsfield House of Pizza (window boxes installed by Dan Philpot)

Best Historic Restoration: Nutter/Keliher Pump

Best Place for Topsfield Children: Steward School (3 recycled picnic tables courtesy of MRIP grant fund thanks to the Recycling Committee, basic design by Nunan's Nursery, workers-Principal Trudy Dooner, parents Patti Mullen and Tony Burke, students Brian Mullen and Sean Burke)

Other Awards-

Best Window Boxes-The Gift Horse

Best Garden Spruce Up-Topsfield Garden Club (Martha Morrison and Kindra Clineff)

Best New Outdoor Landscaping-Keller Williams, Bagel Shop, Write Expression patio

The raffle winners announced at the awards ceremony were Travis Fontaine (planter), Sheila Eddison (planter), Sean Burke (Webkinz), and Kathy Yanchus ("Doors of Topsfield" poster). Thanks to the Topsfield Garden Club, The Gift Horse, and the Topsfield Main Street Foundation for the prize donations. Thanks, also, to the Girl Scouts who assembled wildflower seed packets that were distributed as Makeover favors.

The Topsfield Main Street Board of Directors has been thrilled with the outpouring of support for the Extreme Makeover concept. Steward School families showed their support by donating hundreds of dollars to the landscaping project to enhance the "Oasis" permanently. For information on becoming a member of the Main Street Foundation and supporting projects such as this and the installation of the "Welcome to Topsfield" sign located on Route 1, please visit our web site www.topsfieldmainstreet.org. Hopefully, this is just the first in what will become an annual event until there is no making over left to be done!