



DeKalb News

Abandoned no more

April 6, 2017 Carla Parker 0 Comments



Tucker residents continue to care for Tucker Nature Preserve

For years, nine acres of green space in Tucker sat unattended before a group of Tucker residents came together to clean up the area known as the Tucker Nature Preserve.

Eight years ago, Pam McNall, Beth Ganga and other volunteers came together to clean up the park through the Great American Cleanup-Tucker event. On April 1, volunteers gathered as they have for the prior eight years to clean the park and prepare it for use by the residents of Tucker.

McNall, who is a member of the Friends of Tucker Nature Preserve Board, said the cleanup was started because the property needed some love.

"We gathered up volunteers through Scouts, churches, community groups and the Tucker Civic Association to come together to make a difference and we have built up this place," McNall said. "This Great American Cleanup is how this park is ready every season for spring and summer because the trail-heads get very overgrown. Without the Great American Cleanup, this park wouldn't be as useable."

The Great American Cleanup is a national program through Keep America Beautiful and the local affiliate, Keep DeKalb Beautiful. Ganga said she and her husband got involved with cleaning up the park because "it's a great piece of property that has a lot of potential to really be an asset to the community."

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The green space was purchased by DeKalb County in the early 2000's to save it from development. A developer wanted to build condominiums on the property shortly after Walmart was built across the street, according Ganga.

"The community felt they had lost most of their green space in this area and didn't want the last little piece to be lost to development," she said. "So, the citizens rallied together and convinced the board of commissioners to purchase this as park property."

The late DeKalb County Commissioner Lou Walker led the cause to raise funds to purchase the space and turn it into a public green space. In 2004, Walker died three weeks after the dedication of the park. The park was basically abandoned until Friends of Tucker Nature Preserve stepped in to clean up the space and turn it into a park.

"This was a locked, gated [park]," McNall said. "You had to machete through the invasive [species] to get into the back wooded area, and now there is an amazing trail system [maintained] by volunteers and Eagle Scouts."



Most of the improvements to the park were done by volunteers and donations given by local businesses. A parking lot was created, a picnic table added and trees were planted. Eagles Scouts have also completed several projects in the park, including building a kiosk and creating the trail.

"We're very fortunate to have a lot of support from the community," Ganga said.

"It's incredible that in a few short years we now have parking onsite, trails and a group picnic table. Next on the agenda is to raise grant money for a children's playground," McNall said.

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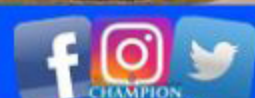


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