

# Ribbon-cutting marks opening of Chauncey Allen Park pavilion and arboretum

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WESTFIELD — At a ribbon-cutting on May 12 for the new Chauncey Allen Park pavilion and arboretum on Smith Avenue, Allen Steiger, president of the Friends of the Grandmothers' Garden asked Jackie McDowell, education coordinator for the board, Ward 3 Councilor Bridget Matthews-Kane and Mayor Michael McCabe to join him for the ceremony. "It's been a fun ride," he said.

Steiger also acknowledged vice president of the board and project manager Dan Florence and planning Chair Maureen Kane. He thanked architect Rob Levesque of R. Levesque Associates, Rich Gale and Bill Laplante of Laplante Construction, and urban forester Sara Greenleaf, of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, who designed and planted 35 trees along a walkway in the arboretum, and Nathan Sperry and the Westfield Technical Academy horticulture shop for designing the landscaping. "A great example of collaboration to continue to build on," he said.

Steiger said the Grandmothers' Garden volunteers under garden manager Carmel Steger have been working very hard next door to prepare the garden for the event, and asked all the garden volunteers present to raise their hands.

He thanked Matthews-Kane for keeping the project going and putting them in touch with the right people. "The pavilion will become a livable space, bringing people together," Matthews-Kane said.

The park and pavilion will also be available to the public for private rentals, weddings and reunions.

"The last group to thank is the city of Westfield," Steiger said. "I met with Mayor McCabe on day one. We agreed this will have a generational impact."

"I consider them more of a partner. They have been instrumental with their financial support. I couldn't think of a better partner," he added, thanking the Community Preservation Committee, the Conservation Commission, the City Council, city planner Jay Vinskey, DPW deputy director Scott Hathaway, Community Development Director Peter Miller and Police Officer John Blascak.



Awarding certificates in recognition of the opening were Mark Messier on behalf of Sen. John Velis and the Massachusetts Senate; Rep. Kelly Pease for the House of Representatives

McDowell thanked Westfield Public Schools for their participation in planning the outdoor learning space. “I’m pleased to have this opportunity. From the first meeting with Superintendent Stefan Czaporowski, I knew in my heart if that meeting did not go well, we would not be here,” she said. “I know we are going to have a bright future with the schools.”



***Friends of the Grandmothers’ Garden education coordinator Jackie McDowell and vice president Dan Florence***

She thanked STEM coordinators Lauren Cadigan and Lindsey Ayers for their input and interest. “Maureen Kane and I visited the STEM labs. We held fast to their suggestions for the number of water spigots, a very accessible bathroom and furniture choices.” She said they also introduced her to the Pioneer Valley STEM Network of 21 area schools.

McDowell said her true inspiration came from her many years in outdoor education at the Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary. She said in Westfield, every second grader goes through a curriculum called What is wild in Westfield, and on May 14, seventy second graders from Westfield River Elementary would already be coming to the pavilion as part of that class.

McDowell also listed the involvement of the Amelia Park Children’s Museum, and planned playgroups at the pavilion to be run by Coordinated Family and Community Engagement. She said they have also already had a course taught by Westfield State University biology professor Kate Weglarz on wetland critters at the park.

“This was designed by group think and community collaboration. Rob Levesque listened patiently,” McDowell said. “This pavilion is for you, the community.”



***The community gathered on Tuesday for the official opening of the Chauncey Allen Park Pavilion***

Steiger invited everyone to keep up with activities on the newly revamped website at [www.grandmothersgarden.org](http://www.grandmothersgarden.org), where they may also find information on the membership program. “We encourage the community to join us and help to support us,” he said

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