



CITYof **MARION**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: City Thanks Garfield Neighborhood and Partners for Initiating Revitalization of Barnes Park; Ribbon Cutting this Sunday

(MARION, IN) October 17th, 2017 – A public park in Marion is receiving a big makeover thanks to the initiative of the Garfield Neighborhood Association and Hands of Hope, a division of Family Service Society, Inc. Garfield Association member and Hands of Hope Director Linda Wilk says the park in their neighborhood, Barnes Park, is undergoing transformation in efforts to ensure a more safe, nurturing environment to foster a good quality of life. Wilk said Barnes Park for years has served little purpose aside from being a spot for criminal-related activity. Last year, the park was significantly damaged after someone drove a vehicle through it.

The Garfield Neighborhood Association stepped into action this spring and approached the City of Marion. The Parks & Recreation Department removed unsafe equipment and offered them an unused playground near the go-kart track. At that point, more people and groups got involved. Kinwell Academy students (formerly of the Crossing) painted existing playground equipment. Volunteers undertook tasks including disassembling old playground equipment, prepping the park for new equipment, and installing freshly painted benches. IWU freshmen painted fencing on a border of the park.

Key leaders with the City of Marion took initiative to help with the Barnes Park project through labor, on-hand materials/equipment, and planning assistance. Parks & Recreation provided and installed a new bicycle rack, welcome sign, picnic tables, grills, trash cans, a dog waste sign with recycled bags, and two concrete slabs for benches.

Currently, Comfort Landscapes is installing a berm with wildflowers and landscaping to prevent drive-through vandalism. Two large boulders have been donated by IMI. Thrivent Insurance has financially assisted Wilk's daughter with the materials to build and install a mini-library at the park.

Wilk explained the funding source behind the initiative. "In all, about \$24,000 will go toward the park from the Delta Focus grant, a funding stream Hands of Hope/Family Service Society, Inc. received from the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence as part of a prevention grant from the Center for Disease Control. The initiative focuses on community and societal changes that we can make around norms, attitudes and beliefs to prevent domestic violence. Research shows that if we provide a safe, stable, nurturing environment for children and families such as revitalizing a park, we can reduce domestic violence along with other crimes."

The Barnes Park project has gained national attention this year. Wilk led two webinars for the Prevention Institute, and the renovation will soon be featured in their magazine.

Wilk will present the project update, thanking partners, during the Marion Common Council meeting tonight at 7pm. There will be a ribbon-cutting on Sunday at 2pm at Barnes Park, located at the intersection of 6th and E Street.

Mayor Jess Alumbaugh explained, “The project has had a positive impact in the community. I hope to see more neighborhood associations, other groups, and individuals take initiatives like this one.”

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