

## **THE PATH TO CREATING A BEAUTIFUL COMMUNITY**

By Katelyn Anderson of The Walsh County Press, March 20, 2013 issue  
(Reprinted with permission of the Walsh County Press)

PARK RIVER, N.D. — Joel Hylden has been an integral part in the beautification of Park River.

The following is part one of an interview with Joel detailing his journey in creating a beautiful town.

### **Q and A Part I:**

#### **Q: Why is our town's appearance important to you?**

A: I have been fascinated by beautiful landscapes since I was a little boy helping my Grandma Alvina Hylden in the garden. She taught me to plant and take care of flowers and to pull weeds. She died on Memorial Day in 1968. I was 16 and wished my grandma could live forever with us. But life is not forever in this body, so 45 years later I am still missing my grandma but enjoying what she taught me by planting flowers and pulling weeds.

When a town is filled with yards where the owners take interest in them, other people take notice. Sadly, people also take notice if the place is not kept up. I have observed that people like to drive around in communities to see the beauty of others yards and parks. When people do, they just naturally become more involved in their own community. I have heard of people moving to a community for the sole reason of that city's beauty including moving to Park River for that reason.

Our community has put together a few groups of people to help with ideas and decisions, such as the zoning and planning committee, the beautification committee, the tree committee and of course the Park Board which has been with us for many years. We also have a garden club in town that continues to beautify our community with their work.

#### **Q: What exactly do you do to help maintain our town's appearance?**

A: I started planting the bike path in 1989, hence the name, Park River Centennial Trees. My original plan was to plant three rows of flowering crab trees — one red, one pink, and one white row. When I brought the plan to the city council, then council member Wayne Grinde pointed out the possibility of one pest or disease specific to flowering crabs wiping them all out at once. So it was back to the drawing board. The idea for an arboretum developed instead, and the city council approved the request to plant trees along the east bike path. Since that day I have been thankful to Wayne Grinde for spurring me to think outside the box, which led to a new idea. At the time I only knew of a few different kinds of trees and hoped one day we could see up to 100 different kinds, now I know of over 500 different kinds of trees that could grow here, so we potentially have a long way to go. The Morton Arboretum in Illinois has over 4,300 different kinds of plants, not that I am in competition, but it would be fun to try.

So now with over 100 different kinds of trees, over 80 different kinds of bushes and over 500 different kinds of flowers on the bike path we can see beauty all year long, but there is room for a whole lot more.

Many people have given honorariums and memorials to loved ones to buy a tree in their name. Corrine Berg has been very helpful in keeping track of who has given and how much. Right now the price per tree is \$100. Every tree on the path has a person's name attached to it. There is room for

many more. When the east path is full we are hoping to develop space for more trees and path. If anyone would like to find a way to label all of the trees with a permanent plant marker that can be seen from the path and last in our weather, it would be greatly appreciated. We are also looking for someone who can make a book of all the people who contributed and the description of the tree that they gave. We are also in need of funds for upkeep and more flowers. All gifts are appreciated Milton and Gloria Olsen have given more than \$1,500.00 towards flowers in honor of his mother (Margaret Ann (Collins) Olsen) and father (Bennie Milton Olsen) and his brother (Robert John Olsen).

I would also like to thank Linda Larson, for helping with proof reading and many other tips for doing a better job on the bike path. Also for her help and the help of Joan Larson, Julie Byron, Kathy Johnson, Annette Dunning, Michael Miller, Judy Troftgruben, Pat Meberg and others mentioned in this article who have given so generously of their time to weed, plant and clean the gardens and the area by the path east of town. I realize that I have not named everyone, but I would like to say thank you to all who have helped and been such an encouragement to me. My brother Robert moved all the chips to the trees and the bushes last year and the Mennonite youth moved all of them in a nice level circle around all of the trees and bushes; thanks to the encouragement of another tree nut, Gene Sundberg. The chips for mulch worked very well and allowed the trees to retain moisture all last year, which in my mind was a miracle considering the dry year.

Speaking of Gene, his wife Beth has decided to do a fundraising supper for the expansion and care for the path(s), on April 4. The supper will be at the City Hall at 6:30 p.m. She will have barbequed pulled pork with all the fixings. I hope you can all come. It will be a free-will donation. You are encouraged to bring your friends and, of course, lots of money that you would like to share. There will be a speaker talking on plant diversity for your yard and town.

I visited with someone the other day who had lived here when I first started planting the trees by the bike path. He was kind to say that he sure appreciated the beauty of the trees and shrubs along the path. He said it is such a welcoming accent to our town. I am very grateful to him and many of you for your kind statements. What I think is interesting is that he mentioned this about the winter look of the path. I truly hope that each of you enjoy seeing our town become more beautiful through the effort everyone is making to allow this to happen.

I should mention that Connie Linstad gave me the idea to put a bike path on the west side of Park River. I went to Jack Karas (Walsh County Commissioner) and Dennis Markusen (former Walsh County Engineer) and asked if the County would consider the possibility of building a bike path to Homme Dam. They both saw it through and now we have a beautiful bike path on the west side of town. In numerous conversations with Dennis we discussed building additional campsites for campers and a new bathroom facility at Homme Dam. Dennis worked very hard along with the approval of our Walsh County Commissioners to get this all accomplished. Actually, Dennis did far more than was even talked about doing and for that, I would like to thank Dennis and Jack and the rest of the Commissioners for all that you did.

**Q: Can you talk a little bit about the rock donated by Bruce?**

A: Bruce Ellingson has been a tremendous supporter of what Damon Johnson and I have been trying to do in our town for many years. Bruce has always wanted to help in some way, but time is a factor because of his construction business. He knew I liked to incorporate rocks in landscaping, so it was his idea to bring in the very large rock we now have south of the east side bike path. I asked Kirk Tingum if the rock could be placed on his family land next to the bike path. He agreed and a new landmark was placed.

The rock weighs in at 31.7 tons and measures about 9 feet high and about 9 feet wide at the bottom. Bruce sells rocks for up to \$.10 a pound, depending on size. A normal landscape rock would run from \$250 to \$750 delivered. Bruce donated this rock to beautify our town. Hopefully, you agree with me, and thank Bruce.

I would really like to put a fountain made of North Dakota rocks beside the bike path. Obviously, permission would have to come from the city council for that to happen.

I spoke with Eldon Troftgruben, a geologist, about different kinds of rocks indigenous to North Dakota. He thought there might be at least 30 or more different kinds of rocks when you consider the different subspecies. It would be fun to have each of them in one location where people could see and study the difference.

Bruce has a lot more rocks that could meet this need and I would like to place them on the bike path. If anyone would like to donate one or more rocks, that would be spectacular. To give towards this project or any other idea you might have, please call me at 701-331-9710.

Part II of the Q and A with Joel Hylden will conclude in the March 27 issue of the Walsh County Press.

## **Q and A Part II:**

### **THE PATH TO CREATING A BEAUTIFUL COMMUNITY**

By Katelyn Anderson of The Walsh County Press, March 27, 2013 issue  
(Reprinted with permission of the Walsh County Press)

#### **Q: Is the town's upkeep different depending on the season?**

A: The Spring, summer, and fall are the busiest for Damon Johnson and I. He and his family have been a wonderful addition to our town. Damon is so willing to give of his time and energy and expertise to keep our town beautiful. For the past few years he has kept the five gardens in the middle of the bike path maintained. He is presently planning a whole new look for the five gardens on the north side of the path. His plans include combining the gardens into one very large garden. Again we need funds to buy dirt and old manure to enhance the soil and its growing capacity. He was on the Park Board and gave countless hours of dedicated volunteer time to promote activities for our youth. He also takes care of the garden on Main Street and has kept up the hanging flowers that were on Main Street, all while carrying on with an extremely busy family and business life. He also has a beautiful yard that everyone should see.

We also have a committee that puts on a fundraiser each year called Blooms - in - June. Ruth Jelinek heads it up with major help from Jo Northagen, Mary Lund, Darlene Knutson, Sue Phelps, Cheri Lothspeich, Gerald Larson, Damon, and myself. Others have helped also and we have many people who give of their beautiful plants as well as those who are willing to purchase those plants to place in their gardens. Our town also has a beautification committee that does a lot to make our town a beautiful place to live.

You asked what we do in each season. The list for me is weeding three gardens on the bike path, plus my own yard; planting and deciding where to plant new trees, shrubs, grasses and flowers, both annuals and perennials; spraying for weeds, insects, deer, and diseases; fertilizing; pruning the trees and shrubs; dead heading the flowers and a constant need to water.

I can't forget to mention that Dr. Gerald Larson helps a lot on the bike path, mainly spraying for weeds around all of the trees and shrubs. He also removes pocket gophers, along with some help from Brad Brummond. The Park Board and the City have been responsible for all of the mowing in the summer and the removal of snow in the winter. For a few years the Park River Fire Department spent a lot of time watering trees. Polar Communications volunteered to dig holes for trees when my shovel would not go through the ground due to the dry weather. When there is no rain for a week or more the soil becomes extremely hard to dig into.

We have two new gardens on the south side of the bike path. The east garden south of Cenex is designed and cared for by Cheri Lothspeich and her dad, Spike. The west garden south of Cenex is designed and cared for by Melissa Irvine and her family.

I would also like to thank Allen Beck for his help with advice and dropping off a few loads of chips for mulch. Also, A. K. Moe from Grafton Floral for many times helping with advice and the incredible promotion of the bike path to his customers. He has given of his time and also discounts on plants for this project, which I greatly appreciate. One of my dreams for all of you is to look at the plants on the path and say to yourself, I sure would like to plant that in my yard. I hope you will be inspired to do so and check with A. K. or Allen for help to find it for your yard.

**Q: Is there anything else you feel should be incorporated into the article.**

A: I have ideas that are overflowing with incredible possibilities for our community. I have shared with the City and its various committees just some of the ideas that I have dreamed of and those that others have shared with me.

One of these ideas is the building of a 50 acre area for a Community Complex that would house many types of events, plus a place for hockey, figure skating, swimming, baseball, softball, t-ball, soccer, basketball, volleyball, tennis, walking track, racket ball, horseshoe, and miniature golf. Maybe someday motocross, horse events and anything else others dream up. My dream for this area would be to beautifully landscape the whole 50 acres and finish all of the facilities in a very upscale look. People love beauty and they are looking for a dream place to bring their family.

I believe we are the community that can do it.

These ideas have actually spurred a great interest in seeing Park River, our town; become the town that many will want to live in. I hope, in my life time, I will see all of these dreams come to reality, so that all in our community can enjoy them to their heart's content. If the truth be known, there are projects that run from a few thousand dollars to tens of thousands to maybe even hundreds of thousands and even into the millions. We have some exciting new ideas to make our community even better. Please come and invest in your future to bring these ideas to fruition, and make this community an even better place to live. For further information on where to give towards these ideas, please give me a call.

It is exciting to see other people get excited about our town. This is a great place to raise a family and live our lives with friends and family. We have excellent facilities such as: an excellent school system, a hospital and doctors clinics, dentists, an eye clinic, veterinarians, massage salon and spa, churches of five denominations, beautiful golf course, excellent white-tail deer hunting, upland game and water fowl hunting, hiking and cross country skiing opportunities. We also have numerous residential and commercial lots for sale in all price ranges and views.

I have many more ideas, but for now I hope I have whet your appetite. I know that many others have a lot of ideas to make our community a better place to live. Please understand it takes time to bring dreams to fruition. I have worked at this since 1989 when the first tree was planted. A few thousand

hours later look what can be done with very few people. Can you imagine what we could do if we all worked together?

A big thank you to all who have given so generously of your time and money.

I mustn't forget to thank my amazing wife and our beautiful children who contributed hours of weeding and planting time. I am so grateful for their willingness to share their time to work and to be involved in this gift to our town.

We hope everyone wants to be involved with what our town can do for you and what we can do for others. It takes a team, a very large team to make it all happen. Please be a part of the team.

If anyone has any ideas or suggestions please don't hesitate to call me at 701-331-9710 or Damon at 701-269-0874.

If anyone would like to give, the address is

**Park River Centennial Trees,**

**P. O. Box 150**

**Park River, ND 58270.**

The cost of one tree is still \$100, but if you want to give more to bring more ideas to fruition that would be absolutely wonderful.



Summer photo taken by Tom Larson



Winter photo taken by Joel Hylden