

A TEAM effort to spruce up PG

Members of TEAM Punta Gorda spent the morning of Sept. 10 putting in new plants and sprucing up little Herald Court Center Park, right across Herald Court from the new parking garage. Nobody was more appreciative of their efforts than Joan LeBeau of the city's Urban Design Department.

LeBeau, the project liaison for the beautification effort, stopped by to see how things were going and thank the TEAM volunteers for teaming with the city on projects the city can no longer afford to fund.

"We love to partner with them; they do a wonderful job," she said. "I really appreciate their assistance and commitment to the city. They've been doing this for years. That's



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the difference between TEAM Punta Gorda and other groups. They stick together."

As usual, TEAM provided the plants, purchased at a discount from Clarke Keller, of Yellow Tree Nursery on Duncan Road, and the labor and tools necessary to do the job.

It was a hot humid day, even at 8 a.m. The six volunteers were soon covered with a layer of sweat and dirt. All went smoothly until, as frequently happens

when shoveling dirt in downtown Punta Gorda, some planting holes proved impossible to dig. Volunteer Don McCormick unearthed a main sprinkler line that couldn't be moved, and Heleen Schouten and Donna Worthley, trying to plant a row of variegated Shefflera arboricola, were thwarted by a layer of subterranean asphalt.

Despite the heat, sweat, dirt and obstacles, the volunteers thought this little jewel

of a park was well worth the effort.

Suzanne McCormick, who heads up the TEAM Beautification Committee, said, "This is a city park," she said. "What we're trying to do is beautify it and let everyone know it for everybody's use. It belongs to the residents. It's beautiful."

Worthley, busy piling soil around a red jatropha, said, "I think we need to do everything we can to make the city more beautiful, more relaxing, serene. This is a secret garden; people drive right by it and never see it."

Schouten agreed. "We're trying to make it more inviting, a place where people can go to have a cup of coffee, relax, meet a friend. It's a hidden gem."

LeBeau said she ex-

pects more foot traffic in the area as Florida Gulf Coast University students appear downtown and retail spaces in the parking garage are filled. Also, the city has a plan to make sure it, and other pocket parks around town, are clearly marked for public use.

"As part of our urban parks program, we're putting up a column with a marker here," she said pointing at the entrance off Herald Court. "We're going to do this in all our smaller urban parks."

LeBeau pointed out that downtown visitors can stop by anytime to enjoy the plantings, shaded benches and fountain. The space can be rented at a nominal fee for small parties and events by calling Lisa Hannon at 941-575-3314.

According to McCormick, TEAM has more work to do in the immediate area, including installing a fence to hide some unsightly equipment, replanting palm trees and ornamental plants along the Herald Court sidewalk and sprucing up the alleyway that runs from Herald Court up to Marion Avenue.

All of TEAM's beautification programs are paid for by the sale of engraved pavers that are placed around the Laisley Park interactive fountain. Call the TEAM office at 941-637-8326 or visit www.tpg.org; one paver is \$100, three for \$250 and five for \$400.

"The more we sell, the more we can help the city out financially," Suzanne McCormick said.



Don McCormick, left, and Shelly Harris dig a new hole for a yellow cassia after hitting a sprinkler pipe in their first one.



HERALD PHOTOS BY GORDON BOWER

TEAM Punta Gorda volunteers, from left, Don and Suzanne McCormick, Heleen Schouten, Peggy Jensen, Donna Worthley and Shelly Harris take a break in the middle of their planting at Herald Court Center Park.



Donna Worthley uses the nonbusiness end of a shovel to tamp the soil around a red jatropha.



Parks and Grounds employee Keith McDonough, called in to look at a sprinkler hole in a planting hole, delivers the bad news to Suzanne McCormick that the pipe can't be moved and that a new hole must be dug.



Donna Worthley, left, and Heleen Schouten set a crinum lily into a planting hole.