

Make A Difference Day to continue success with veterans park in Neptune

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Oct. 19, 2013 |

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NEPTUNE — In a shared attempt to better the lives of others, millions of people volunteer for numerous projects across the U.S. as a part of Make A Difference Day on the fourth Saturday of every October. One of those projects will benefit the township this year.

The day owes its popularity to USA Today WEEKEND Magazine, a Gannett-owned publication that trumpets the largest national day of good deeds and has done so for more than 20 years..

Through its parent-company's hundreds of local publications and its partnerships with Points of Light and Newman's Own, the magazine rallies volunteers to participate in thousands of projects each year that involve corporations, communities, nonprofit organizations, states and individuals.

In New Jersey, the Asbury Park Press and its sister newspapers participate. During this year's Make A Difference Day on Saturday, Oct. 26, the Asbury Park Press will partner with Coastal Habitat for Humanity of Spring Lake Heights and community volunteers to lay the foundation for the township's Veterans Memorial Park, which has awaited a start since the township acquired the land four years ago.

"We can support our community and our community, in turn, will respect us for what we do," said Kathi Abatemarco, director of human resources for Asbury Park Press. "We do want to make a difference and this is our way of making a difference in the community is getting involved in a community project, so it is a partnership."

The passive park will sit on the site of the historic Welsh Farms Dairy on Old Corlies Avenue and serve as a dedication to township veterans with monuments, flags, trails, paths, flowers, shrubbery and a seating area. A museum and community center will replace the farm house. Volunteers will clear the ground and landscape the area to ready the park for its official opening on Veterans Day.

Anybody interested in volunteering to join the day's effort may do so. If possible, they should bring shovels, rakes, trimmers, sunscreen and gloves. For more information, call 732-643-3104, email volunteerinfo@njpressmedia.com or visit www.makeadifferenceday.com to sign-up directly.

Last year, Asbury Park Press teamed with the Affordable Housing Alliance to help convert an Eatontown property to a group home for adults with disabilities.

Elsewhere, the day produces similar stories.

On the day's 10th anniversary in Larimer County, Colo., it turned into Make A Difference Week, with 4,450 people aiding 75 organizations and roughly 40,000 residents. Volunteers of all ages completed 150 projects countywide that included raking leaves for the elderly, harvesting crops for the hungry, and clearing graffiti, trash and weeds, according to Gannett's website.