

THE MAYOR'S COLUMN

Join Park Pals Program

By PAM MOUNT

As Mayor, I have heard from and seen just how much residents use, enjoy and appreciate our parks from the hundreds of children who play games on our fields to the seniors who walk, to bird watchers, star gazers and bike riders.

Over the years, our public works department has done a fantastic job developing and maintaining our parks.

A crew of nine men (two spend most of their time maintaining and lining the playing fields) typically work on the acres of parkland.

Usually we are able to hire 10 or so summer helpers but not this summer, as we try to keep taxes low.

Also, in the past, we have been able to take advantage of a state program where minimum-security prisoners picked up trash along the roadways, but this program has been eliminated.

So we need help!

Lawrence Township has over 1,000 acres of parks both active, developed and passive. Our town is also home to Mercer County Park Northwest, the State Canal Tow Path Park along the Delaware Raritan Canal, and a number of preserved farmland, greenways and the Lawrence-Hopewell Trail.

I am proposing a Park Pals program where neighbors help with their neighborhood parks.

The public workers will continue to do the heavy work, but I would like to see people "adopt" a park.

Neighbors can get together and plan how they would like their park to look and be used as well as plan events and activities for their neighborhood using the park. The Nature Center can be designated as a meeting place for neighborhoods to discuss the parks as well. Meetings can be organized at convenient times.

I think that any of Lawrence's parks could benefit from Park Pals program but to begin with we are considering these parks:

- Hamnet on Ohio Avenue
- Eldridge Park
- Gilpin Park
- Lawrence Veterans Park
- Stonicker Park
- Colonial Lake Park
- The Dog Run at Village Park
- Loveless Preserve
- The Nature Center at Drexel Park
- Carson Road Woods

You do not need to live near one of the above parks to help. Ideas and energy are the main ingredients. These are challenging

times and we need new solutions, new ideas and a willingness to try them.

Having signs that identify the trees might be one interesting way to improve all our parks. Recently, Rick Dutko installed signs on many trees around the meadow at the Nature Center with the help of some Boy Scouts to help educate those of us, who visit the park.

Fixing trails or creating new trails might be a good project as well.

The Greenways Committee is just about ready to publish a trail guide to the trails in all our parks. The guide should be available this summer and will be a great resource.

No one is too old or young to help!

For more information, on the Park Pals program call Mayor Pam Mount at (609) 924-2310 or Greg Whitehead at (609) 587-

1894 and volunteer and be a Park PAL. Also keep in mind, Colonial Lake Park Clean-Up Day will be May 2, at 10 a.m.

Contact Pam Mount at info@terhuneorchards.com.



Mount