

# EDUCATION

Record

## Gardens to memorialize Pascack Valley educator

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HILLSDALE – Sapienza Gardens, honoring the memory of longtime teacher and principal of Pascack Valley High School, is scheduled to open next spring.

Barbara Sapienza, who worked at the high school for nearly 40 years, died in March at the age of 63 after complications from knee surgery. The Saddle River resident was the longest-standing employee at the school, beginning as a typing teacher and working her way up to principal.

The garden is a community project for Hillsdale, River Vale and the Pascack Valley school district.

"Gardening was one of her passions. A garden is something that most people who knew her felt would be emblematic of her," said Hillsdale Mayor John Sapanara.

"We knew it would be the perfect memorial."

"Her life's work was teaching, but her avocation was gardening," added Virginia Korteweg, a close friend of Sapienza and of Sapienza's mother, Sally Leone.

"She has a wonderful garden of her own in her yard in Saddle River. We will replicate her garden in the reading garden."

In the coming year, volunteers from the community will plant 100 pink and white dogwood trees and 20,000 daffodils in the gardens.

The tract on 2.7 acres behind the high school was preserved earlier this year as open space. Hillsdale officials determined the site would be used for two gardens to memorialize the late principal: a Children's Learning Garden where youngsters can learn how to plant and nurture a wide variety of plants, and a Reading Gar-

den where visitors can connect with nature.

The land was purchased in January through the county and state Open Space funds. The garden will cost taxpayers nothing, said Borough Administrator Harold Karns, adding that all work is being done by volunteers and all trees and flowers will be donated.

"So far, 23 trees have been donated by individuals at a cost of \$350 each," Karns said.

The plan came about when a private donor approached Hillsdale about developing a garden in Sapienza's memory, said Tom DeMaio, named principal of Pascack Valley High School in April.

"Barbara was Pascack Valley High School. The school meant the world to her and so did the faculty and the kids that she touched every day. She devoted 40 years, 24/7 to this place."



Barbara Sapienza died in March. Sapienza Gardens in Hillsdale are scheduled to open next spring.

Now when everyone sees beautiful flora and fauna in the garden, he said, they will think of the educator who helped nurture them.

For more information or to volunteer, call Karns at 201-666-4800, ext. 1504.

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