



STAFF PHOTOS BY KATHRYN A. BURGER

Christina Ungaró, left, and Alyssa Schaeffer, both members of Pascack Valley High School's International Thespian Society Troupe 7427, were among more than 40 PV students who spent a recent afternoon cleaning up Sapienza Gardens in Hillsdale. Gathering litter, clearing paths of branches and leaves were among the tasks the students performed.



Mike Arogot, left, puts the finishing touches on depression left when a tree toppled this summer. He and Lenny Marshall, also pictured, are both members of the Pascack Valley High School's International Thespian Society Troupe 7427.



Several groups from Pascack Valley High School were represented at the fall clean-up at Sapienza Gardens. The Italian Honor Society, the Spanish Honor Society, the Environmental Club all had members participate. Pictured here are members of the school's International Thespian Society Troupe 7427 who restacked pavers that vandals had thrown in the underbrush.



Members of the Pascack Valley High School cross-country team worked on filling large holes that resulted when trees were toppled during summer's severe weather. The Sapienza Gardens Foundation provided work gloves, rakes, shovels - and doughnuts and cider for all the student volunteers - as well as their praise for a job well done.

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Foundation, was formed shortly after the untimely death of Barbara Sapienza, principal of Pascack Valley High, in March of 2008. This nearly three-acre tract was acquired through the concerted efforts of several local entities, including the municipal governments and boards of education of Hillsdale and River Vale, as well as the friends and family, to honor Dr. Sapienza's memory and the contributions she made to the district during her more than 30 years at the school.

Since its acquisition by the non-profit foundation, the area - long

used as a dumping ground for all manner of debris - has been cleared, paths have been established and trees planted. In the fall of 2008, volunteers planted 13,000 daffodils that were in full bloom when the park was official opened to the public in the spring of 2009.

The Foundation's board of trustees has worked tirelessly to maintain the area and to improve the park. Several events have been held to encourage area residents to visit the park, a veritable oasis of peace and quiet, towering trees, and walking paths that meander throughout the site.

On the recent fall clean-up day, PV students from several school organizations were assigned tasks

and worked side-by-side with board of directors members Jenny Frantin and Susan Vaccaro, and advisory board members Lorraine Thalmann and Peter Philip, both of whom are also members of the Hillsdale Environmental Commission.

Thalmann and Peter were both impressed with how quickly the students set to work. Members of the International Thespian Society Troupe #7427 retrieved dozens of pavers that had been neatly stacked awaiting installation. Persons unknown had thrown them into the surrounding underbrush and worse, many had been broken. Thalmann said, "I don't understand why people would do that kind of thing,"

handling one of the broken pavers. The Foundation struggles to finance its projects and the idea that unthinking, uncaring people would destroy property for "fun" escapes her.

Shannon Rodenberg, a junior at PV and a member of the Environmental Club, and Sabrina Chapman, also a junior and a member of the Italian Honor Society, were picking up litter and made a discovery. They found two hand-made wooden signs under leaves and branches. Both had been posted by Joseph Pagano, an Eagle Scout. The sign reads: "Sapienza Learning Garden" along with his name and troop number. The other sign acknowledges those who donated goods to this effort, his Eagle project.

Frantin, who is on the board of directors, said another Eagle Scout project is underway at the site. Shawn Meindl, of Hillsdale Troop 109 is creating a semicircular

garden in the southern area of the park. "And there is a Girl Scout who is creating a Fitness Trail as her Bronze Award project," she said.

Philip, of the advisory board, said they'd like to have a gate at the entrance to the site, but it appears that won't happen. "The borough police and fire department both said they must have unimpeded access to the property. We'd like to discourage unwelcome visitors - like those who vandalize and litter the area - as well as stopping vehicles from driving in," he said. There is a small, one-lane bridge over the brook at the Knickerbocker Avenue entrance to the park. It can accommodate vehicles and has been used by the borough DPW, including during the first major clean-up of the area. Philip said, "Without a gate, the bridge may entice people to drive in.

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There is no parking area and some of the open ground is low-lying and can be muddy." He pointed to tire tracks that intersect one of the walking trails.

They'd also like to have a sign at the entrance identifying the area as Sapienza Gardens. Proceeds from the Fall Festival will be used toward that goal.

In the meantime, the all-volunteer organization, with the support of area residents, school and scout groups, will continue

their work to maintain and improve the area and encourage residents to visit.

The "Fall Festival" is one way to introduce residents to this gem of nature.

Those interested in supporting their work either by making a donation, volunteering or donating goods, such as a sign, or services, such as installing the pavers, are encouraged to contact the Foundation. Visit sapienzagardens.org for complete contact information.

E-mail: burger@northjersey.com

Fall Festival at Sapienza Gardens

When: Sunday, Oct. 24 - 1:30 to 3 p.m.

Where: Hillsdale: Entrance at the eastern terminus of Knickerbocker Ave.; northbound on Kinderkamack Road, first right after Piermont Avenue.

What: Free activities for adults and children. Pie Baking and Scarecrow contests, candy for those in costumes; temporary tattoos for kids; free raffle of Victorian gift basket; cider, coffee, tea and baked goods available for purchase.

More information: sapienzagardens.org

HILLSDALE

Free 'Fall Festival' is Oct. 24 at Sapienza Gardens

Event follows clean-up by Pascack Valley High students

BY KATHRYN BURGER
Of Community Life

More than 40 student volunteers who attend Pascack Valley High School spent a recent afternoon at Sapienza Gardens clearing paths, picking up litter,

restacking pavers strewn by persons unknown, and filling gaping holes left by trees toppled during recent storms. Their efforts and those of the board of trustees and other volunteers have prepared the Gardens for a new event.

On Sunday, Oct. 24, the inaugural "Fall Festival" will be held at the Gardens from 1:30 to 3 p.m. The trustees of the Sapienza Gardens Foundation have planned a variety of activities for this free event including a Pie Baking Contest, a Scarecrow

Contest, "Dodging for Doughnuts" and children are encouraged to wear their Halloween costumes and do some trick-or-treating.

There are two Pie Baking Contest categories: Apple Pies and Thanksgiving Pies (pecan, mincemeat, etc.) with prizes for the winner in each category. To register for the contest, go to

www.sapienzagardens.org for complete information. Participation is free.

A bake sale - including pies baked for the contest - will be held and coffee, tea and cider will be sold.

The Sapienza Gardens

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