



Lewis and Clark's YouthBuild, Lowe's stores team up to improve Alton neighborhood

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GODFREY – Area youth are not only building better futures for themselves, but leaving a lasting impact on a historic Alton neighborhood this summer.

Building Futures YouthBuild at Lewis and Clark Community College has embarked on a long-term Central Avenue Beautification Project, in which students in the program

will help identify the repair and beautification needs of private and commercial properties, at no cost to homeowners.

YouthBuild, a program which guides students ages 16-24 through GED preparation to bridge courses in preparation for college, is housed at L&C's Scott Bibb Center, located at 5th Street and Central Avenue.

“Good or bad, our neighborhoods both past and present inevitably become a part of us and are woven into the fabric of who we are to become,” said YouthBuild Coordinator Pat Mays. “Our neighborhoods have a deep and lasting impression on us, which is why it’s important that these students are doing their part to leave a lasting positive impression in this part of the community.”

The project will begin at the circle and end at the intersection of East 4th Street and Central, where plans include the installation of a pocket park. The scope of work is to impact at least 60 homes, with total work estimated at \$30,000, which comes in the form of grants and donations.

Local Lowe’s Home Improvement stores in Alton and Glen Carbon have been integral partners in the project, donating \$2,500 each toward materials, for a total of \$5,000, and 15 volunteer work hours.

“The Lowe’s Heroes project has been instrumental to YouthBuild the last three years,” said Director of Building Futures Sabrina Davis. “We have had the fortune of working with volunteers from Lowe’s on a Boys and Girls Club remodel last year, the Habitat for Humanity build the year before; outside of this Central Avenue Beautification Project, they are also getting involved in mentoring our students. It is inspiring to see big businesses in our neighborhood working to create change and impact lives.”



Nearly a dozen volunteers from Lowe's joined YouthBuild students, faculty and staff June 20-21 in painting, fence repair and deck staining at several homes near the 1500 block of Central.

"Giving back is the heart and soul of our purpose and values at Lowe's," said Adrienne Portell, store manager at the Alton Lowe's.

Mitch Fletcher, YouthBuild construction trainer, said students handed out flyers along the Central Avenue earlier this spring, and residents followed up by contacting the program about their needs. Staff members then assessed those requests and came up with a plan of action. A kickoff for the project was held May 27 at the Scott Bibb Center.

Of the YouthBuild students on site last week were two recent YouthBuild graduates, Arnez McCorkle and Andre Ewing. On Monday, June 20, McCorkle painted a resident's porch while Ewing helped install a new fence on the same property.

“Being on Central has been great,” Ewing said. “We're doing good by helping people in the neighborhood with their homes. I think it's important that we keep Alton clean and this is just one step in doing just that.”

Ewing, who earned his GED this June, plans to continue his education in Welding Technology at Lewis and Clark.

To learn more about YouthBuild, visit www.lc.edu/youthbuild, or the YouthBuild blog at <http://buildingfutureslc.wordpress.com>. See more photos as the project progresses at <https://flic.kr/s/aHskB96AMX>.

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