

Phase one done on fountain improvements

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - Improvements on the fountain at **Statehouse Square** should be finished by this coming spring's last frost, project chair **Tim Matifis** said.

The improvements are part of the latest project by regional beautification organization **PRIDE, Inc.** The organization is celebrating its 50th anniversary by presenting a large

gift of beautification to anyone passing through the rotary encircling the square. Matifis said phase one of the project was recently completed with the installation of seven planting beds around the fountain.

"Phase one was the retaining walls for the planting beds," Matifis said. "We have four perimeter ones around the circle and three curved ones around the fountain itself. We added a bunch of fill dirt and are going to let it settle over the winter before we put plants in over the spring."

The cost of phase one of the project was an estimated \$20,000. Matifis said donations from community businesses allowed the project to break ground and progress as much as it has. He said the organization's 50th anniversary party at the beginning of the year saw an outpouring of donations for the project. **OSF St. Anthony's Healthcare Center** donated \$5,000 to the improvements and the **Alton-Godfrey Rotary Club** donated \$3,000. PRIDE, Inc. spent \$5,000 of its own funds for the beautification effort as well.

Phase two of the project may cost as much as an additional \$15,000, Matifis said. That money would be used to purchase the ornamental plants destined for the recently-finished boxes. He said, when completed, the area around the fountain will be a stunning showcase in every season, except maybe winter.

"We're planting autumn serviceberry trees," Matifis said. "It's a very beautiful tree. It has white flowers in the spring and the leaves turn an orange-red color in the fall. There will be one of those in the center of each of the perimeter beds."

On each end of those beds will be ornamental crab apple trees, he added. Besides the trees, Matifis said the planter boxes will also contain shrubby such as pink knockout rose bushes.

"We decided to go with pink to coordinate with St. Anthony's," he said. "They have pink knockout rose bushes as well."

A portion of that additional \$15,000 will also contribute to ornamental rocks and grasses in each planter box area as well as a circle of mulching around each decorative tree.

Matifis designed the project to save PRIDE, Inc. money, he said. When the plan was originally being discussed, the group was going to hire a contractor to design it. Matifis said he had some experience in landscape design and wanted to see his drawings come to life.

"I've only been a member for a couple years," Matifis said. "I came up with the design myself, and I'm pretty proud of it. It's been a long road, but it's been fun."



That spirit of fun and beautification is a cornerstone of PRIDE, Inc., current board president **Pat Schwarte** said. The group has been dedicated to the continued beautification of Alton and Godfrey for 50 years. Schwarte said PRIDE, Inc. will continue to build from the legacy of **Dr. Gordon Moore**, who championed some of the first large-scale beautification efforts in Alton's history.

"I want to emphasize how impressive, vibrant and active PRIDE, Inc. is overall," Schwarte said. "When you look at things we do such as the **Bucket Brigade**, which has painted thousands of homes, it's the difference between, in some cases, a blighted neighborhood and an appealing neighborhood."

The Bucket Brigade is one of many such beautification efforts PRIDE, Inc. does throughout the community. The **Miles Davis Statue** in Downtown Alton is another of PRIDE, Inc.'s efforts. Schwarte also mentioned annual citywide litter cleanups to demonstrate PRIDE Inc.'s commitments to making Alton and Godfrey more appealing areas.

PRIDE, Inc. is currently searching for "new blood," Matifis said. To recruit more members, Matifis and Schwarte said the group is hosting a meeting at **Johnson's Corner**

, located at 2000 State St. in Alton, on the second Wednesday of December from 5-7 p. m. Schwarte said anyone with passion and a dedication to community action and improvement should join.

"We look for members who want to be active in the community, who are either vested or want to be vested in beautification of the area," Schwarte said. "The current group is fun, social and participatory, which translates to an appealing area to live in, work in and visit."

Schwarte said he would also like to thank the local businesses who not only contribute money towards beautification programs, but also allow their employees to volunteer for those projects while on company time, including **Illinois American Water, Alton Memorial Hospital** and OSF St. Anthony's Healthcare Center.

The organization's annual celebrity roast will take place on Jan. 19, 2017 and will feature special guest of honor, **River Bend Growth Association (RBGA) President Monica Bristow.**

