

Neighbors spruce up Everett Street with greenery

By Ken Howard, Correspondent

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Allston-Brighton - When Allston residents ran out of water this weekend, 5-year-old Levi Mattison came to the rescue, ready to navigate his red wagon to the nearest faucet and fill several 5-gallon buckets.

“[For] filling up the water, you have to be strong,” said Mattison, adjusting his Red Sox cap backwards.

Mattison was one of the volunteers who met with the Allston-Brighton North Neighbors’ Forum on Aug. 2 and 3 to plant trees and bushes along Everett Street between Lincoln and Adamson streets.

While bringing the wagon back to the site, Mattison said, “I pull [the wagon] and then we get to [a neighbor’s] house, we fill it up, and then a grownup pulls it back while me or a kid pushes.”

Among his duties at the tree-planting event, one of his major contributions was “helping get rid of the lemonade,” he said.

It’s great that roughly a dozen people can come out on a Saturday to make this site more beautiful and create a safer place for people to walk past and enjoy, said Levi’s father, Harry Mattison, an active member of the neighborhood group. “Trees are of community good for everyone.”

“This is a site that’s been pretty neglected,” said Mattison. “There are these sort of bands, these slivers and patches, of the neighborhood that have gone neglected for too long, and [it’s] too easy to forget they are there.”

The neighborhood group was awarded a \$2,500 CityRoots grant by the Urban Ecology Institute to cover the costs of supplies. The group also provided a community forester and a consulting landscape architect to help plan the event.

“The program is designed to help out with a lot of areas,” said Tim Porter, the community forester hired for the task. “The planting helps improve air quality; also there’s an aspect of the process to build neighborhood unity and to introduce as many stakeholders and all the diverse groups of people in the neighborhood to one another.”

Decked out in dirt clot-hiking boots and a moist polo, Porter planted a red maple tree weighing roughly 300 pounds, with the help of three volunteers. The group also planted red buds, cherry, service berry and maple trees, along with a pine tree.

Porter said Mahoney’s Garden Center on 449 Western Ave. gave the group a 50 percent discount on supplies, Shaw’s Supermarket provided refreshments and Harvard University contributed to the project by clearing the tree stumps and weeds that plagued the area.

“I think this is an example of how Harvard and the community have worked well together over the years, and we think it’s terrific the space will be cleaned up and made more attractive,” said Kevin McCluskey, senior director of community relations at Harvard University, in a phone interview.

But for Chris Wagner, a volunteer from Allston who works as an environmental consultant, improving the environment is an everyday commitment.

“This is right up my alley,” he said, after opening a bag of compost barehanded.

It was impressive to see the community relying heavily on plants native to the New England area, he said.

“You don’t need to get something from a far-away land; you can find stuff that grows locally that’s going to be well suited to the conditions that you’re planting,” said Wagner.



From left, Levi Mattison, Chris Wagner and Ryan Bunck help plant trees along Everett Street. The Allston Brighton North Neighbors Forum received a grant from the Urban Ecology Institute for the project.