

October 27, 2012

DORCHESTER CARES

There is only one word to describe the events of the day! WOW! Eight A.M. and already Paul O'Malley and the Norfolk Hardware truck was in front of 36 Saranac Street dropping off power tools and materials for the day's work. R & R Landscaping pulled up minutes later with a team of three, chain saws, hedge clippers and branch cutters. Sid Sibley of Sibley Construction pulled up with his team and set up a work table with a saw. Cedar Grove Gardens' familiar van showed up with Richard O'Meara and John Mazzone toting mulch and soil. Moving the dumpster into place held up traffic but the neighbors didn't mind; and so started the first annual Dorchester Cares event.

The brain child of Tony Paciulli of Meetinghouse Bank and Carlos Vargas of Vargas and Vargas Insurance, Dorchester Cares started as a germinating thought in late August and blossomed into a major event by mid- September. Their idea was to select a house of a needy home owner, struggling with up keep, gather volunteers, sponsors and donations to make possible light repairs and clean up. The response was overwhelming! NO surprise there; we live and work in a Great Community full of many generous and kind folks.

Thirty Six Saranac Street was selected from among six nominated properties. The house is about 80 years old, owned for the last thirty years by a widow of fourteen years, and two adult children with needs. The two story house has two bedroom apartments on each floor. Signs of struggle with upkeep were everywhere as hedges covered the first floor porch and grazed the sills of the second floor windows. Hedge outgrowth hampered access to the driveway, a mature pine tree in the back laid its branches on utility wires and the roof top. Planks on the front porch sagged under pressure and the back porch was covered with sap and moss. The plan was to stay until noon and it looked like we would need all that time.

Over thirty volunteers showed up buzzing all over the property. Vargas and Vargas' team numbered about seven including his sons Jonathan and Joe who spent most of their morning in the high branches of the pine tree out back, sawing off errant limbs. Tony had a team of about four from Meetinghouse, along with Larry Marino from Lower Mills Web Designs who all worked to transform the front porch with scraping off the old and putting down a new coat of paint. City Councilor Frank Baker's team included his Bob Bankowski and his crew from R & R landscaping along with our youngest volunteer 11 year old Brooke McEchern, daughter of Joe who was wielding a paint brush with the best of them! Councilman Baker after hefting barrels of tree debris to the dumpster took the power washer to the back porch. State Rep Linda Dorcena Forry with her team along with Julie Joyce and her husband Steve from Connolly Equipment and Snow Plowing raked and swept up after Jose, Maurice and Carlos manicured the hedges. The Jack Conway Real Estate team worked alongside Shelly Goehring from MAHA (Massachusetts Housing Authority) doing back breaking detail weeding along the sides of the house! Mike Skilling was on hand from the Dorchester Civic Association. What a turn out!

Astonishingly, by 10:30 the bulk of the work was done and team members were gathering, admiring their accomplishments over the welcome and delicious pastries and coffee furnished by Sweet Life!

The end result was striking, manicured hedges, a repaired front porch, newly painted trim, the back yard freed of tree stumps and hanging branches and a power washed deck. The dumpster was packed to overflowing and our volunteers had put in a solid day's work. An incredible event by an incredible bunch of people! As we said! WOW. Response and outcome was so sensational, Carlos and Tony are already thinking about doing maybe two houses next year!

Dorchester Cares was sponsored by Meetinghouse Bank and Vargas and Vargas insurance. The Success of this event was made possible by co-sponsors: City Councilor Frank Baker, State Representative Linda Dorcena Forry, Boston Bayside properties, Cedar Grove Gardens, Lower Mills Web Design, Sibley Construction, Connolly Equipment and Snow Removal, Jack Conway Realtors, Sweet Life Café and Carney Hospital.

Hardy thanks go to the dedicated and hardworking volunteers who were not mentioned above: Jeff Camara, Jeff Gomes, Julie Simmons, Joe Vargas, Jon Vargas,, Jason Pinheiro, Rob Spavento, Jill Baker, Joe McEchern, John Oliva, Jose and Carlos Andrade, Maurice Goodwin, Frank Penzo, Don Beurman, Maria Pina, Amy Frigulietti.