

The Beautification Committee Helps Harrison Bloom

By Lorraine Thomas Sherman

Soon, Harrison residents will feast their weary, winterized eyes on blossoms of every hue. Currently drab street corners, neglected parks, and downtown sites are being readied for the season. This metamorphosis does not occur in a vacuum—it is a tribute to the hard work of dedicated Harrisonites Denise DiBiasi and Helen Pesce, co-chairing the newly resuscitated Beautification Committee.

Since moving back to Purchase in 1987, DiBiasi, has been active in the effort to make Harrison attractive, and in 2000 she became very much involved with the Department of Public Works.

Impetus to move forward was initiated when "a couple of people who moved into downtown Harrison were not happy with the way it looked. They were very interested in what they could do, explained DiBiasi.

Still in touch with the DPW, DiBiasi approached Commissioner Bob Wasp.

"We needed things done, and they did them. Helen and I put our heads together with Mayor Stephen Malfitano and decided to go with this. He is behind us 150%!"

They began working on breathing life back into the beautification of Harrison. Backed by the strong advocacy of Mayor Malfitano, the Committee has been infused with energy once again. As the mayor comments,

"Citizen input and involvement is extremely important to any municipality, and I welcome the participation of the newly re-established Beautification Committee. I'm grateful for their time, their expertise and their interest in improving the physical appearance of our town."

Plantings were instituted during the autumn months. Publicity was garnered through appeals and ads inserted on the back page of the Newsletter distributed by the Mayor's office, asking people to contact them. The response was tremendous. Their last meeting attracted sixteen people instead of the usual five or six.

In addition to growing things, the committee will arrange for new Gateway signs that welcome visitors to Harrison. Current signs are faded and "have put in their time," says DiBiasi. The intention is to make all such signs uniform throughout Harrison.

The need to cultivate and rebuild was evident...many areas were overgrown and neglected; now spring bulbs are in bloom.

"In Passidomo Park," comments DiBiasi, "there is a sizable plot on one side of the memorial that we will be planting and bringing back to life."

Petti John Park, a little area outside the town Building, will also see improve-

ment if DiBiasi has her way. She remarked with strong feeling about Mary Macarato, who lives near the park,

"It broke my heart when I spoke to her...she tried to get three administrations to clean it up a little. It is decrepit and an eyesore, overgrown and weedy."

Although they did not want to spend a lot of money—the ground is sandy soil and would wash away—the DPW constructed a small retaining wall. Bulbs were planted, and the intent is to place shrubs that will require little maintenance in the area.

To get an idea of just how resolute DiBiasi is, her statement to Macarato says it all: "I made a commitment to you, and I will move mountains to have this done."

"We have different projects throughout the town that we want to get up and running. Some might think, 'Oh, it's little things, just flowers.' But it's not just flowers. When you are driving along and see bursts of color, it is an uplifting experience."

The opportunity to 'adopt a plot,' is also offered. Pesce notes sometimes landscapers donate time and materials and plant everything and the town's water trucks go around watering them. Another possibility, an idea borrowed from White Plains, is purchasing a memorial bench in honor of or in memory of someone; or individuals may donate a tree if they wish. Starting work on Christmas and holiday decorations is now on the agenda.

Looking ahead, Pesce is in the process of fine-tuning their new website. Anyone interested in further information or attending meetings is advised to check the Town Scroll or e-mail Pesce (hagas001@aol.com) or DiBiasi (gdibi3@aol.com). The next meeting of the Beautification Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, June 15, 10:00-11:30 a.m. in the Town Hall Courtroom.

"I have worked with some wonderful people," says DiBiasi regarding the Harrison Beautification Committee. "This group is so motivated; everyone brings something special and different to the table, yet we work as one. We are excited about this year and what lies ahead."

