

# Spring has sprung for Communities in Bloom

By DANIEL SCHWAB

The advent of spring in Essex can guarantee three things: the weather will soon be warmer, the flowers will start to grow and the local Communities In Bloom group will begin to prepare for this year's competition.

All four wards in the municipality will be teaming up this season to promote the most fetching natural and cultural environments the area has to offer.

CIB chairperson Cindy Barnett said the partnership will only increase the group's chances of scoring big when judges arrive to tour the municipality when the national competition kicks off in August.

Barnett said the area can now be recognized for its rich heritage sites, such as Colchester's John R. Park Homestead and McGregor's Gas and Steam Engine Museum.

"It's very exciting," Barnett said. "Essex is good, but when you put the four wards together – it's a fantastic opportunity."

Last year, Ward 1 scored four out of a possible five "blooms" judged against



The Clean-up Kids – The Heritage Gardens are neat and tidy after a group of high school students put some effort into beautifying the area in preparation for this year's Communities in Bloom competition. From left: Josh Brackell, Kaitlyn Weller, Jordan Ferguson, Joe Shepley and Zach Mutter.

towns of a comparable size and population.

Now, the municipality will compete with larger areas, but Barnett said the fact that all of the wards are working together is the most important aspect of the

event. "Even if we get one bloom, that's OK, because everybody is working together," she said.

The 15 volunteers will meet once a month leading up to the competition, and

will make plans to clean up litter and plant flower beds in an effort to beautify the municipality.

Last week, Essex and District Horticultural Society member Kathy Hudak led a small group of

high school students in cleaning up outside the Essex Railway Station.

Western Secondary School and Essex District High School students tidied up flower gardens, pruned trees and raked up litter.

"It's the idea that we're cleaning up and becoming proud of our community," Hudak said of preparations for the CIB event.

Hudak said gardening activities will soon be underway in all parts of the municipality.

Volunteers are always welcomed to pitch in, she said.

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