

WHILE SHE WAS OUT

*Friendly, hardworking volunteers
sweat it out and make over
a neighbor's yard in a day.*



S T. PETERSBURG — It wasn't a total surprise. After all, Robin Smith had invited her neighbors to make over her yard.

What astounded her was the transformation a few dozen loving hands could accomplish in a day.

"Oh, my goodness," the 40-year-old divorced mother of three exclaimed as she arrived home last Saturday. "This doesn't look like the same house. Oh, my gosh, it's beautiful."

Members of the Historic Kenwood Neighborhood Association and its garden club had pulled off their

own version of the television program "While You Were Out." Bill Heyen came up with the idea, hoping the resulting yard and garden would add a nice new twist for the neighborhood's annual tour of homes Nov. 8.

They posted a notice in their newsletter seeking a neighbor in need of a makeover. Of the dozen responses, they chose Smith, whose yard had large shady oaks but also some dead trees. Some shrubs were overgrown, others shabby with age. And her bungalow's welcoming porch was hidden by rows of jalousie windows.

"I'm excited," she said, as she prepared to leave home about 8 a.m. on makeover day to visit a friend and attend a

company picnic.

The volunteers wasted no time getting started. They brought rakes, shovels, saws, drills, hammers, weed trimmers, trowels, hoes and paintbrushes.

"When we start doing a project, we DO a project," said volunteer Paula Sili.

Jeff Danner, a contractor who works on historic homes, led a crew dismantling the porch windows. They took out the glass panels and aluminum frames to create a fresh, airy feel.

At one point, 32 men, women and children pitched in. Following the instructions by organizer Sue Winger, they began taking down trees, whacking a bougainvillea bush and yanking plants.

Danner's wife, Robin, worked alongside daughters Nycolette, 10, and Alyxandria, 13.

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Good game plan allows work to go smoothly.



Clark Antonelli applies a fresh coat of paint to the porch. The volunteer says the makeover is a throwback to the neighborly ways of the past.



Tribune photos by BRUCE HOSKING

While Robin Smith was away for the day, volunteers from her neighborhood association and its garden club went to work on her bungalow. Top, Bill Heyen, left, Alan Fulnik, on ladder, and Jay Tarry start by cutting back overgrown shady oaks. Middle, Buddy Holliday carefully removes jalousie windows that hid a welcoming front porch. Bottom, Smith, left, returns home and gets a tour from Sue Winger, who points out the many improvements made to her house and yard.

Tour Historic Kenwood Homes During Annual BungalowFest

ST. PETERSBURG — See historic homes and visit gardens during the fifth annual Historic Kenwood Neighborhood Association's BungalowFest from noon to 5 p.m. Nov. 8.

Tickets are \$10, which includes an air-conditioned tram ride through the historic neighborhood, characterized by brick streets and a concentration of Craftsman-style bungalows.

Trolley stops allow people to disembark (or board) to view 15 houses and a yard transformed during

an eight-hour makeover by the neighborhood association and its garden club.

Tickets may be purchased the day of the event at Seminole Park, 2900 Third Ave. N.

To get to Seminole Park, take Interstate 275 to the Fifth Avenue North exit. Go west on Fifth Avenue North to 28th Street. Go south on 28th Street to Third Avenue and go west on Third Avenue until you see the park.

B.C. Manion

NEIGHBORLY MAKEOVER

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"They need to be part of the community we're in," she said.

Helping is just the right thing to do, said Jay Tarry, taking down a dead maple with Heyen. "This group makes it fun. In this neighborhood, what goes around, comes around."

Work crews thinned out plant beds. They transplanted plants. They yanked some out and trashed them.

As the day wore on, they filled six trucks with branches, limbs, bushes and other debris. They carted it off before Smith came home.

Neighborhood Spirit

The volunteers worked with a sense of purpose and camaraderie.

They cheered on Cliff Waters as he worked a blower, clearing debris off the sidewalk. "Go Clll-IFF, Go Clll-IFF."

Volunteer after volunteer said they came to help because they love Historic Kenwood.

"Look at this neighborhood. You've got gay neighbors, straight neighbors, black neighbors. We all work together. You can belong here if you want to belong," said Johnathan Johnson.

Sweat rolled off Johnson's face as he wedged a shovel along the edge of the sidewalk, breaking up old roots.



Paul Hoffmann takes a well-earned break in the shade across the street from Smith's house.

"I work 12-hour days, but this is important," said Johnson, a full-time mortgage broker and part-time worker at Home Depot.

"You can't expect a good neighbor-



Tribune photos by BRUCE HOSKIN

Volunteers Jeff Danner and Sue Winger remove framing for jalousie windows that had encumbered Robin Smith's front porch. Danner is a contractor who works on historic homes.

"I think it's very cool. It's a wonderful idea, especially for folks like Robin, who have to do everything by themselves most of the time. This is what neighborhoods should be all about."

LISA ROJAS

Robin Smith's neighbor

hood to bite you on the butt. You have to be willing to work for it."

The makeover included picket fences at the corners of the front yard, a pond with a recirculating fountain, an archway with a swinging gate and flowering plants and a welcome sign to greet visitors to Smith's residence.

Some of the neighbors brought items: A \$150 Home Depot gift card that had been given to the association paid for some supplies, and another \$150 from association funds paid for the rest.

The porch trim and steps were painted, and a neighborhood plaque, flag and new porch light were installed.

An old wooden Adirondack chair had been repaired and painted periwinkle purple, along with a small table, to create a resting spot next to the gurgling pond.

The work went smoothly because



Johnnathan Johnson, a mortgage broker, breaks up old roots on the edge of a sidewalk.

organizers had a good game plan and volunteers were willing to do what was needed, said Paul Hoffmann, another volunteer.

"People just kind of flowed to wherever they were needed," Hoffmann said.

Alan and Sharon Pulnik no longer live in Kenwood but came out to help anyway. Sharon brought coleus from her yard to plant under Smith's oak

tree. Then she helped plant liriopona lavender, macho ferns, snow bushes and fire spark.

Others transplanted gingers, lilies, heliconias and schefflera.

'Neighbors Helping Neighbors'

"This is how it was done years ago neighbors helping neighbors," said Mark Antonelli, a tool salesman working on the porch.

"The best thing about this neighborhood is the spirit," said Caro Hess, an artist who made decorative house numbers to replace the plain ones and painted a stylized mailbox for the porch.

In addition to the new landscaping workers spread buckets of fertilizer to enrich the soil. They added layers of mulch to keep the shrubs and flowering plants healthy.

Lisa Rojas, who lives next door to Smith, came over to check out the action.

"I think it's very cool. It's a wonderful idea, especially for folks like Robin who have to do everything by themselves most of the time," Rojas said. "This is what neighborhoods should be all about."

The group's accomplishment blew Smith away.

"Thank you so much," Smith said hugging Winger. "I couldn't even have imagined this."

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