

Middle school reaps what soon-to-be Eagle Scout sows

** Brady Jackson's 180-plus hours of work have created a 'learning environment' at Hyatts Middle School.*

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Brady Jackson knew he'd found the right project when he saw the waist-high grass and weeds covering parts of the Olentangy Hyatts Middle School garden.

The 14-year-old Boy Scout, who graduated from Hyatts in June and will attend Olentangy Orange High School starting next month, chose to renovate the garden as part of his efforts to achieve Eagle Scout status this spring.

It took more than 180 hours of hard work, but today the garden, located behind Hyatts Middle School, 885 Sawmill Parkway, has been transformed into an outdoor classroom, with new mulch, benches and four picnic tables.

In the garden's six raised beds, Hyatts teachers are growing herbs, tomatoes, peppers, squash, beans, strawberries, lettuce, carrots and more.

The work began in March when a \$1,000 donation from the Jarret Feucht Memorial Fund helped to kick-start the project.

The fund was established in memory of an Olentangy student who died in a car accident in 2007.

"That was the donation that made this all possible," Brady said.

Jarret was a classmate of Brady's younger brother at Oak Creek Elementary School when he died. He loved gardening and the outdoors, said Brady's mother, Angie Jackson, and had just started his first year as a Cub Scout.

As part of the project, Brady created a small memorial for Jarret near the gate of the garden, with a memorial plaque set on a stone, along with trees and flowers.

It was hard work when the real renovations began in March, Brady said. He got help from fellow members of Troop 844 to lay 35 square yards of landscaping fabric over the grass, then fill the garden with fresh mulch.

"It was a really tough job, but thankfully I had help," Brady said.

After soliciting donations, he received discounted park benches from Big Lots, and Lowe's donated picnic tables to the project as well as apple trees that now line the back row of the garden.

Brady constructed a compost bin out of wooden pallets as a finishing touch.

The garden was started in spring 2010 through a grant from the State Library of Ohio. The Hyatts Wellness Institute, established during the 2009-10 school year, took charge to create the garden, with about a dozen teachers and employees participating.

They helped to install a water line and fencing and constructed and filled the raised beds.



Angie Jackson, who teaches Spanish at Hyatts, said her son's efforts have made the garden relevant for students.

"Before, most of the kids didn't even know we had a garden," she said. "Now it is really a nice learning environment."

The renewed space will be a boon for teachers, said Principal Kathy McFarland.

Some already used the garden in June for end-of-the-year parties and as outdoor silent-reading space, and science teachers have plans to integrate the garden into their curriculum,

Students in the seventh-grade Watershed Program at Hyatts also have made use of the space, adding birdhouses and feeders.

Brady currently is awaiting approval by scout leaders to be named an Eagle Scout.

The Boy Scout, who works at a local equestrian center caring for horses, goats and llamas when he isn't camping, hiking or partaking in other scouting activities, said it would be his biggest achievement yet.

"It's an accomplishment that very few people get," he said. "For me, it's about being a leader and being someone that the younger scouts can look up to."