



From left: Brenda Cook, Mary Rhea and Caitlin Vendely relay a patio. (Photo by Navar Watson)

Paying it forward, one home at a time

By Navar Watson - news@currentnoblesville.com

Keep Noblesville Beautiful hosted its 10th annual Clean-Up Blitz June 14, where volunteers improved the yards of houses bordered by Fifth, Eighth, Cherry and Hannibal streets.

Tasks included weeding, mulching and “basically all the outdoor home improvement stuff you can think of,” as Girl Scout Tessa Fischer described it.

“It’s more productive than sleeping in,” Girl Scout Madi Murray said about spending her Saturday morning mulching. “Getting dirty every once in a while is fun.”

Murray and Fischer also were two of the incoming high school seniors gathering community service hours for the National Honors Society at Noblesville High School.

Realtor Brenda Cook volunteered with her friends from the Friendly Northside Neighborhood Crime Watch. They worked mainly on one house, relaying the patio and reconstructing the sidewalk out front. She has volunteered for about six years.

“I live here, and I want the community to be taken care of,” Cook said. “The only way to do it is to get involved and make sure the community is taken care of.”

About 60 people helped with this year’s blitz, KNB Board member Ann Lemna said. Among the groups volunteering were members of the Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints, Manuka Girl Scouts troop, Boy Scouts of America, crime watch and many families.

“It feels good because you’re giving back to the community,” Rylee Tostevin, a visiting cousin of one of the girl scouts said. “You know you’re doing something good, and you’re around nice people.”

Sunbelt Rentals donated several wheelbarrows for the project, and GreenCycle donated 20 yards of mulch, Lemna said. Schwartz’s Bait & Tackle, Ginger’s Café, Meijer, Wal-Mart and Sam’s Club donated food. Lemna said the Hamilton County Master Gardeners are also “key players” in the blitz instructing volunteers on where plants should be planted and what works best for the homeowner’s landscape.

“The homeowners are left with knowing how to care for their property,” Lemna said. “It’s an educational program as well.”

Lemna said some homeowners become interested in the program and ask about signing up for the next blitz. Others, like Marianna Dowd, joined the volunteers as they worked on her house and others in the neighborhood.

“It just means so much,” Dowd said of the program. “It motivates me to get out here and get things done – things that I know I’ve kind of let go ... It helps so much.”