

How residents of Fox Chase subdivision in St. Charles keep their neighborhood beautiful



The Fox Chase neighborhood's entry median is maintained by volunteers with the Fox Chase Boulevard Median Foundation. *(Rick West | Staff Photographer, 2018)*



Dave Heun

Posted 12/3/2021 6:00 AM

It's not that the city of St. Charles' public works department can't keep the median it owns in the Fox Chase subdivision in good shape. However, it is more than a half-mile long along Fox Chase Boulevard from Winners Cup Circle to Dunham Road. That's a lot of trees and planting beds to maintain. And that's why a group of Fox Chase residents 10 years formed the Fox Chase Boulevard Median Foundation to help the city take care of what amounts to a vital stretch of property in the subdivision.

The foundation helps maintain the six islands of various sizes that make up the median, with more than 70 trees and 12 landscape beds featuring shrubs, native grasses and perennial flowers.



The plantings on the median that runs through the Fox Chase subdivision in St. Charles are maintained by the Fox Chase Boulevard Median Foundation. - Courtesy of Fox Chase Boulevard Median Foundation

The Fox Valley region has its share of showcase neighborhoods, and sometimes the story behind the scenes tells us that simply having a nice home doesn't guarantee your neighborhood will stand out over the long haul. More often than not, it takes an entire neighborhood mindset to accomplish something everyone wants -- an appealing or even striking appearance to welcome residents and visitors.

That sums up the mission of the Fox Chase Median Foundation. Members are fully engaged in regularly taking out weeds, replacing dying or diseased plants, and replacing wood chips in the planting beds every two years.



The Fox Chase Boulevard Median Foundation helps maintain the six islands of various sizes that make up the median, which has more than 70 trees and 12 landscape beds featuring shrubs, native grasses and perennial flowers. - Courtesy of Fox Chase Boulevard Median Foundation

The most interesting aspect of the foundation is something I mentioned a decade ago when this neighborhood group initially formed.

Because the city owns the median and mows the grass and cares for trees, the foundation secured a license in 2011 to maintain the landscape areas, said foundation president Bob Walters.

"Over time, the foundation became more active in funding the planting of new trees and trimming existing trees," Walters noted.

Ultimately, the cooperation between the city and the foundation represents a good example of how neighborhood groups can work with a city to keep medians and berms looking sharp.

"With the exception of the small bed of annual flowers at the entrance, we use plantings that are drought- and salt-tolerant, so they have a better chance to thrive in the harsh conditions in the island -- and to reduce the cost of watering," Walters said.



The plantings on the median that runs through the Fox Chase subdivision in St. Charles are maintained by the Fox Chase Boulevard Median Foundation. - Courtesy of Fox Chase Boulevard Median Foundation

It is not uncommon to see volunteer workers cleaning up medians or small islands with plantings in many subdivisions throughout the area. For Fox Chase, it has become a team effort with Ryan Myers, who is the public works division manager for public services in St. Charles.

Walters and foundation treasurer Todd Henning have been on the foundation board since it began.

"As treasurer, I am particularly proud of how low we have kept the cost of the median maintenance down over the years," Henning said. "Our donors have been very responsive, and we want to respect their generosity."

Walters maintains the foundation website, allowing residents to keep an eye on the group's operations.

"Everything we do is on the website for donors to see," Henning noted. "Bob also added a donation option through PayPal to make things as easy as possible for our donors."

That has helped the foundation develop more than 200 donors a year.

By the way, the foundation partners with Aintree Community Association to place holiday wreaths at the Dunham Road, Aintree Road and Squire Lane entrances.

None of this is to say that we should all strive to live in a place like Fox Chase and that any other type of neighborhood can't compare, and there isn't an ounce of reality in that sort of message. However, what we should all do is look at this as an example of what neighbors can do to make the places they live just that much better.

Consignment in St. Charles

Folks in McHenry County who drop off clothes for consignment at Double Take Consignment in Crystal Lake likely know something many St. Charles residents may not know.

Double Take Consignment was scheduled to open its second location earlier this week, at 122 W. Main St., where the Stanbridge Master Saddlers business has operated for several years.

Of course, longtime St. Charles residents still refer to that storefront as the Colson's building, for the clothing store that operated there for years, well before the Vertical Drop Ski and Patio shop did business at that location.

Double Take is going through its soft opening now and is planning a larger grand opening soon.

Sky-high for scones

My sweet tooth has a particular fondness for scones, and, through the years, it has encountered some pretty good ones from the bakeries throughout the Tri-Cities.

It dawned on me not long ago that one scone, in particular, keeps luring me back into the bakery. As such, it feels pretty safe to declare it my favorite.

The cinnamon scones at Hahn's Bakery in Geneva should be considered borderline illegal. They are so tasty, and they are laced with cinnamon chips, which of course, makes it a cinnamon scone and adds greatly to the pleasure.

Now, this part is just advice from an older gent who knows he shouldn't be pounding down these types of treats regularly. Two of these scones last about a week in my house, and I eat only a couple of bites from one each day, then wrap what's left in plastic wrap to try to keep it as fresh as possible.

It cuts down on any guilt one might encounter with these decadent pleasures. I figure it's a fairly even exchange -- the calories coming in are not overwhelmingly difficult to counter with regular activities and some light exercise. Plus, it gives you several days of the same tasty experience.

Regardless of how you choose to consume them, these cinnamon scones are some of the greatest baked goods I've encountered.

They help us all

There is no denying the efforts of individuals and small businesses, and organizations in coming to aid those in need year-round, but especially at this time of year. The Daily Herald has been highlighting these types of people the past week under the theme of "someone to be thankful for."

But it's also important to note many of the large brand-name businesses in our area also go above and beyond in their efforts to help local communities.

In helping TriCity Family Services distribute Thanksgiving baskets to families last week, it was hard not to notice that FedEx donated many bags of food and dropped them off at the agency in purple "FedEx Cares" bags.

I have seen teams of volunteers from Kohl's help at various events and car dealerships underwriting golf outings and other events to raise money for causes.

It all adds up to the benefit of the communities we live in.

dheun@sbcglobal.net