

Milestones & Advice



Milestones

Neighborhoods plant pride in garden

By **H.M. Cauley**
for the AJC

Next summer, Boyd Johnson won't be trekking to the grocery store or farmers market to find home-grown tomatoes. The 20-year Brookhaven resident will be slicing up meaty red vegetables that he plucks from his own plot in a new community garden.

Johnson is one of 20 residents of the Brookhaven and North Buckhead communities who snagged plots in the garden that was constructed in a sunny portion of the new city park at 4012 Peachtree Dunwoody Road, on the border between the neighborhoods. Johnson, who has been part of the committee planning the park facilities, found a swell of support for a garden area.

"Community gardens are very hot items in urban areas right now," he said. "A lot of people who come from rural areas find they miss something without having a garden, and here they can get a flavor of that without leaving the city. And I thought it would appeal to a lot of people like me who would love to have tomatoes but who don't have a sunny spot in their backyard. We found what is pretty much the only sunny spot on the whole site and made it a garden."

The 5-acre park was carved out of vacant lots that had been a dumping ground for concrete, boul-



Volunteers build the new joint community garden between the North Buckhead and Brookhaven neighborhoods. Photos by Mandy LeCompte

ders and chunks of asphalt. Parks department workers hauled off three dump truck loads to clear the way for a green space.

The garden takes up only a quarter-acre and includes 21 plots that average 8-by-10 feet.

Neighborhood residents recently teamed with Park Pride volunteers from the Reznick Group to build

the raised beds and protective fencing. In a single morning, about 60 workers swarmed over the area and created an area ready for planting. Many of the supplies were paid for by a Park Pride grant.

"Park Pride was awesome," said Johnson. "They helped with 80 percent of the funds for the design, materials and in-

stallation."

The two neighborhoods created a "founding gardener program" that sold the first plots for \$200 each and a \$50 park membership. The 20 plots sold out in two weeks. An extra plot was set aside to raise produce that will be donated to a local nonprofit.

Garden administrator Christy Roberts has lived



Community gardener Boyd Johnson (foreground) works with neighborhood and Park Pride volunteers to build the community garden in the park.

in Brookhaven for eight years, and volunteered to organize the project even though she is not an avid gardener.

"I just want to be able to eat my own tomatoes and put a squash on my table without tearing up my backyard to do it," she said. "The garden is very close by and even the smallest bed will hold a few tomato plants. Eventually, we want to put in a potting shed, a water source and a compost pile."

Johnson expects the local gardeners will put in a cover crop to get the ground through the winter. "Then we'll be ready to plant in the spring," he said. "I'm sure we'll see lots of herbs, peppers, pole beans, bush beans — things that can be grown compactly. Tomatoes are always easy, but corn might

be tough. It wouldn't surprise me if we have people doing plants for their home flower arrangements."

Johnson is also working on a plan to ring the garden with blueberry, raspberry and muscadine bushes. "The goal is to make use of all the sunny land we have," he said. "I'm expecting a tremendous amount of variety. Most of all, I'm expecting people will have a lot of fun with it."

"Milestones" covers significant events and times in the lives of metro Atlantans. Big or small, well-known or not — tell us of a milestone we should write about. Send information to hm_cauley@yahoo.com or mail to Milestones, c/o Jamila Robinson, 72 Marietta St. N.W., Atlanta, GA 30303.