Starting a Beautification Campaign in Your Community

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STARTING A BEAUTIFICATION CAMPAIGN IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Cooperative Extension Service • Purdue University • West Lafayette, Indiana
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Introduction

Community beautification campaigns have a number of advantages beyond the obvious benefit of improved physical appearance. In a successful clean-up/fix-up campaign, individuals and groups work together to achieve a common goal of community beautification. This can develop teamwork, stronger feelings of friendship, and a shared sense of achievement and pride which can lead to the initiation of more in-depth improvement projects in the future. Citizens learn how to get things done by developing an idea, formulating a plan, and mobilizing resources to carry out the plan. Beautification programs produce immediate, highly visible results which stimulate more citizen interest and enthusiasm and possibly generate support for other community needs. A successful program can also give visibility and credibility to a newly formed community improvement group since success tends to breed success. Beautification programs are easily undertaken, can be accomplished in a relatively short period, and require little financial resources.

The purpose of this publication is to give you some general guidelines and suggestions for a successful beautification campaign. There is no "right" way to go about it just as there is no "cookbook" formula to guarantee success. You must develop a program to meet the unique needs and organizational structure of your community.

Getting Organized

Community beautification programs require considerable amounts of effort to organize and coordinate all activities. A strong beautification committee is the core of the program. The committee is responsible for identifying beautification needs, setting goals, scheduling activities, recruiting volunteers, gaining support from members of the community, identifying available resources, publicizing the effort, and coordinating all aspects of the program to its completion.

The committee should choose persons to fill several positions. It is important that these people have the interest and willingness to serve in their...
chosen capacity and be willing to commit the necessary time. Positions that should be considered include:

1. **Chairperson** - to preside at the committee meetings, to coordinate all activities, to keep committee members informed, to provide the necessary leadership.

2. **Secretary** - to notify committee members of meetings, to keep minutes, to record all efforts and achievements, and to take care of any correspondence.

3. **Publicity coordinator** - to publicize the program and keep the community aware of all activities. This would involve writing newspaper articles, making sure announcements are made at church and other organization meetings, securing radio coverage, and distributing flyers and posters.

4. **Volunteer coordinator** - to recruit and coordinate volunteers to assist in the program. This would involve close communication with all community organizations such as church groups, youth organizations, sororities, civic clubs, etc.

5. **Equipment coordinator** - to identify, secure the use of, and coordinate any equipment that may be needed for the effort—dump trucks, wreckers, rakes, wheelbarrows, garbage collectors, trash cans, etc.

6. **Financial coordinator** - to determine any possible costs for the program and to secure sources of funding for such expenses. The person should recruit contributions and donations when possible.

Two to four people may be assigned to assist the volunteer, equipment and financial coordinators.

**Identifying Beautification Needs**

The first order of business is to identify needs and to set goals for the program. This can be done in a number of ways:

1. The committee alone may be responsible for determining project goals—possibly through a subcommittee of three to five people;

2. The committee may solicit ideas and suggestions from individuals and organizations in the community;

3. The committee may conduct a survey to obtain public opinion concerning beautification needs.

It is sometimes helpful to walk the streets of the community to identify clean-up/fix-up needs. A checklist has been developed for this purpose. Parts of the checklist may or may not be applicable to your community. It is best for you to develop your own checklist. *(See Appendix A)*

After identifying beautification needs in your community, clear-cut and realistic goals need to be established. Keep in mind that you can’t beautify the entire community overnight. Determine what the committee feels it can handle in a specified period of time. Ask yourselves the following questions:

1. What will be the project area?

2. What will be the time period for the main thrust of the program—a day? a week? or a month?

3. What can we as a committee expect to accomplish?

4. If other organizations cooperate in the effort, what can we expect to accomplish?

5. How can we encourage storeowners and homeowners to make improvements to their properties?

6. On which public areas should we concentrate our efforts?

7. How can we encourage clean-up/fix-up efforts on a continual basis?

The answers to these questions will assist you in setting your goals and priorities.

**Developing a Plan**

After identifying beautification needs in the community and setting goals, a plan should be developed explicitly stating how to go about meeting those goals. Each project should be discussed in terms of its potential improvement to the community as well as any possible roadblocks that may keep you from accomplishing your goals. Discuss needed resources, available resources, and resources that will have to be acquired. This includes manpower, equipment and money. Also, determine the amount of time that will be required to complete the project. Can it be completed in a few hours? a day? a week? or longer? You might wish to use the outline in Appendix B to assist you in developing your plan.

With an idea of what you hope to accomplish, you need to set a date for the clean-up program that is realistic. Allow enough time to plan the program adequately and to initiate the publicity. Spring is a good time to plan such a project as most people are interested in clean-up/fix-up efforts at that time. Be sure the date you choose does not conflict with other community activities.

You need to work backward from the date set to establish a time schedule for the publicity and all necessary tasks. The outline given in Appendix C is meant to assist you in developing your own schedule. Again, set a time frame that is realistic to accomplish your goals. Set specific dates and deadlines in your plan and stick to them!

As the date for your beautification program draws nearer, develop a specific calendar of events for that day, week or month. This is helpful not only for the organization of the program but also for the publicity of the program. The outline in Appendix D might be used.
Suggestions and Ideas

You may find some of the following suggestions helpful in planning a successful program:

1. Involve as many community organizations as possible. The more broad-based support you have for the program, the more successful it will be. Organizations not only have ideas of what might be done, they also have manpower, equipment, financial sources, and other resources. Perhaps the Senior Citizens Club could serve coffee and doughnuts to the workers, the Boy Scouts could pick up trash in the park, the Garden Club could plant flowers in various public places, and various other organizations could carry out other projects.

2. Have the Mayor or Town Board President officially "kick off" the program.

3. Don't be afraid to ask for donations and contributions. Perhaps the town board would donate free use of equipment for the program; the local hardware store might give a 10 percent discount on all improvement items purchased from his store in return for free publicity; perhaps the ladies' church societies would fix refreshments for the workers; the county dump might waive the fee for one week; the local service station owner might donate use of the wrecker for one day to tow away junk cars; or perhaps the local bank would contribute an ornamental tree to the town park. Be creative and don't be afraid to ask. Most people are willing to give if they know how and for what their contributions will be used.

4. To create additional interest and enthusiasm, awards might be given for notable improvements such as "Yard-of-the-Week" award, "Most Improved Storefront" award, or the "Work Horse" award for those people who were the most active. Perhaps local businesses or organizations would contribute to purchase the awards.

5. Major events or highlights should be integrated into the plan, such as painting the name of the town on the water tower or dedicating a new fountain in the park. Such events heighten the community's enthusiasm and sense of achievement.

Pay attention to detail! Make sure you know what, who, how and when to complete each project. If trash will be collected at certain times, make sure the necessary arrangements are made (manpower and equipment) and that the citizens know where and when the service will be available. There are many activities that can be undertaken or encouraged during a beautification program. The list in Appendix E may give you some additional ideas.

Creating Community Awareness

An active, well-coordinated publicity effort is essential to the success of a beautification program. Publicity is necessary to bring about the greatest possible degree of involvement and awareness. Clean-up and beautification programs are excellent means of involving the entire community in a single effort. However, the involvement of individuals and groups will become a reality only when the entire community is aware of beautification needs and the necessity for a total community effort. Thus, a well-coordinated publicity program requires time and effort.

Several suggestions are made for the promotion of a beautification program:

1. Announce the formation of a beautification committee.
2. Report all committee meetings in the local newspaper.
3. Publicize the need for individual and organizational involvement.
4. Publicize suggested clean-up activities and beautification needs. Possibly show photographs.
5. Announce the support and participation of industries, businesses, municipal services, and organizations.
6. Publicize the plan of action, calendar of events, and any available awards.
7. Report all actual activities and accomplishments, perhaps showing before and after photos. Document changes.
8. Recognize all individual and organization efforts and contributions.

In addition, a poster contest may be undertaken in the grade school and the posters displayed in the downtown merchants' windows. Flyers might be distributed through the school or in the grocery store or be taken to each household. A series of articles concerning general information might be written and included in the local paper. These articles could include information on state and municipal ordinances concerning junk car removal, renovation or destruction of dilapidated buildings, burning laws, maintenance of vacant lots, mobile home siting, disposal of trash, and maintenance of junk yards.
Advertising (publicity that you pay for) can be an effective promotional tool. Such publicity may be sponsored by a local organization such as the Chamber of Commerce, or it may be possible to have a group of merchants advertise a schedule of clean-up activities along with advertisements saluting groups involved in beautification projects.

Whatever form the publicity program takes, it is essential to the success of beautification projects. It must be a part of the program from the planning stage through to the completion of the project. Publicity will facilitate involvement and awareness and will keep the program before the public.

**Giving Recognition**

Recognition is also a very important aspect of a community beautification program. People like to receive approval and acknowledgment for their efforts. Recognition may be given to businesses, industries, service clubs, or individuals for their services, donations, or support. There are several ways of expressing recognition such as giving a personal “thank you,” using the media of newspaper, radio or TV, or giving an awards dinner where certificates of achievement might be awarded. Recognition itself is a worthwhile project and can greatly encourage continued pride and interest in the community.

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)

**Financing the Campaign**

The costs of a beautification program are minimal. The most needed resources are volunteer labor and community support. Many local resources exist, and it can be astonishing what a community can do when everyone works together. Some local sources might include:

1. **Local government** - the town board or city council, the park department, city engineer’s office, and others may be willing to donate manpower or needed equipment to the effort. Small funds may be available to purchase new street signs, trees, planters, park benches, etc. Perhaps the town would be willing to match funds that the community can raise to purchase needed materials.

2. **Local businesses and industries** - Local businesses and industries may be asked to bear the costs of fixing up their own properties or perhaps donating materials for the program. Maybe a deal with the local hardware store could be arranged where everyone buying supplies at that store to improve their properties would get a 10 percent discount. Don’t forget the banks! Maybe they could arrange and make available small home or business improvement loans. Local utility companies may also be interested in becoming involved in community improvement.

3. **Organizations and Groups** - Organizations and groups have two assets needed for a successful program: numbers of people or organized manpower, and the ability to raise money. Perhaps each organization could undertake one project, be responsible for raising the needed money and carrying out the project. The support of the Chamber of Commerce, sororities, labor unions, churches, 4-H, scouts, youth groups, the Senior Citizen Club, and other voluntary organizations is essential for the success of the program.

4. **Individuals** - Individuals who volunteer their services, equipment or financial contributions are very important. Perhaps a memorial program could be established whereby trees, benches, fountains or other improvements could be dedicated in the memory of a deceased person. If people feel something is worthwhile, they are usually willing to contribute to it. A fund drive could be started to help raise money needed to purchase materials. There are a number of fund raising activities that could be undertaken either by an organization or by a group of individuals, such as bake sales, antique auctions, garage sales, fish fries, pancake and sausage suppers, etc.

A community should never be hesitant to initiate a beautification effort because of a lack of money. With the dedication and enthusiasm of the citizens and the support of the community, the resources will appear. It requires an effort, however, of initiating the program, identifying and coordinating the resources, and knowing how to apply them effectively.

**References**

“Community Beautification...it’s more than just Clean-up, Fix-up, Paint-up,” Community Assistance Pamphlet II, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Spring 1977.

To order litterbags for “Keep America Beautiful” contact: Keep America Beautiful, Inc., 99 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10016
# APPENDIX A

## Beautification Checklist

This list is not all-inclusive but may be a start to identifying beautification needs in your community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Area</th>
<th>Action Needed</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paint on buildings</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Overhead and store signs</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Signs in windows</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Windows on second &amp; third floors</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Window displays</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cleanliness of windows</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees and shrubs</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flowers</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street signs</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Trash containers</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Streets</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cleanliness of parking areas</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness of streets</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilapidated buildings</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacant buildings</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Entrance to Community

| Billboards                              | Yes/No        |          |
| Landscaping                             | Yes/No        |          |

## Parks

<p>| Cleanliness in general                  | Yes/No        |          |
| Parking lots                            | Yes/No        |          |
| Picnic areas                            | Yes/No        |          |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Needed</th>
<th></th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parks</strong> (continued)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscaping</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Condition of equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Public Buildings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community center</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Town hall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fire station</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Post office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking lots</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bus or train depots</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cemeteries</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fairgrounds</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Streams</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Appearance of bridges</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Landscaping of banks</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stream bed debris</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community in general</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Junk yards</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vacant lots</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dilapidated homes or buildings</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Junk cars</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Residential areas</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home repair</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

Chairperson

Phone

Committee

Publicity Coordinator

Phone

Volunteer Coordinator

Phone

Equipment Coordinator

Phone

Financial Coordinator

Phone

Beautification Week

Plan of Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Resources Needed</th>
<th>Resources Available</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
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# APPENDIX C

**Beautification Week Planning Period**  
**Calendar of Events**

General time frame — specific details to be filled in by community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 8 WEEKS BEFORE  | — Form committee  
|                 | — Initial planning  
|                 | — Initial publicity                                                     |
| 7 WEEKS BEFORE  | — Contact community organizations for support                             |
| 6 WEEKS BEFORE  | — Discuss ideas and general plan of action  
|                 | — Prepare to identify needs                                               |
| 5 WEEKS BEFORE  | — Identify needs  
|                 | — Publicity                                                               |
| 4 WEEKS BEFORE  | — Develop plan  
|                 | — Solicit support of local government, groups, and organizations          |
| 3 WEEKS BEFORE  | — Develop plan  
|                 | — Solicit support                                                        |
| 2 WEEKS BEFORE  | — Detailed plan, assigned responsibility and identified resources to be complete  
|                 | — Publicity campaign                                                      |
|                 | — Schedule activities for that week                                       |
| 1 WEEK BEFORE   | — Extensive publicity campaign                                            |
APPENDIX D

Beautification Week
Calendar of Events*

(To be completed in detail by the community)

Monday — Mayor or Town Board President kicks off Beautification Week

__________________________________________

Tuesday

__________________________________________

Wednesday

__________________________________________

Thursday

__________________________________________

Friday

__________________________________________

Saturday — Community recognition and awards** dinner

__________________________________________

* Events might include unveiling of new sculpture in park, dedication of new trees, fountain or special flower planting, unveiling of a wall mural, etc.
** Awards might include “Most Improved Home,” “Most Improved Business,” Youth displaying the most leadership, etc. Recognition should be given to all those businesses, industries, local governmental agencies, service groups and organizations, and individuals who participate.
APPENDIX E
Community Beautification Ideas

Entrance to Community
1. Remove billboards.
2. Paint or acquire new welcome sign to community.
3. Landscape town entrance.

Downtown Business Area
1. An overall design or remodeling plan drawn by an architect is ideal. It will give owners ideas of what they can do with their properties; will provide them with some guidelines and standards; and will help coordinate storefront improvements in a more unified manner.
2. It may be best to work block-by-block rather than having single, isolated remodeled buildings. A single block totally refurbished will have a greater visual impact and will show the community what can be done when business people cooperate.
3. Encourage business owners to remodel, paint or fix up their store fronts. Steam cleaning, sand blasting and painting can do wonders to improve a downtown.
4. Encourage owners to clean in front of their shops.
5. Encourage owners to clean windows, to remove posters and excess signs, to have curtains in upper-story windows, and to repair or replace awnings over windows.
6. Encourage owners to repair or replace overhead signs and to remove any that are unnecessary.
7. Encourage more attractive window displays.
8. Make contact with absentee owners and make the same recommendations.
10. Plant trees along streets and in parking lots.
11. Landscape parking lots with trees, shrubs and flowers.
12. Paint, repair or add new trash containers, benches, flower planters.
14. Create mini-parks, art niches, kiosks, or sitting areas in unused spaces or vacant lots.
15. Paint attractive wall mural.

Parks
1. Clean up trash, cut weeds, trim trees and shrubs.
2. Repair or paint benches, trash containers, playground equipment.
3. Landscape.
4. Acquire new fountains, statues.
5. Improve lighting.

Fairgrounds
1. Clean up trash, cut weeds.
2. Landscape.

Cemeteries
1. Clean up trash, cut weeds.
2. Trim bushes.
3. Landscape—planting new grass, trees or shrubs.
4. Paint fence.
Streams
1. Paint bridges.
2. Clean up stream bed.
3. Landscape banks.

Streets and Sidewalks
1. Clean out gutters, sweep streets.
2. Paint, repair or replace street signs.
3. Resurface streets or sidewalks.
4. Repair or replace curbs.
5. Paint curbs and street markings.
6. Fix curbs for bicycles and wheelchairs.
7. New street lighting.
8. Eliminate traffic hazards by removing growth from curves and intersections where view is obstructed.

Community in General
1. Clean up or fence in junk yards.
2. Clean up vacant lots.
3. Remove junk or abandoned cars.
4. Remove dilapidated homes or buildings.
5. Remove dead trees and tree stumps, trim trees and shrubs.
6. Develop a community improvement emblem.
7. Sponsor a fly and mosquito control campaign.
8. Sponsor an animal control campaign (cat, dog, rat).
9. Sponsor a community fair or festival.

Residential areas
1. Encourage home improvement, possibly through loans made available at low interest rates for home improvement.

2. Encourage individual yard clean up and landscaping. (Perhaps develop a "Home Repair" or "Yard-of-the-Week" Contest.)

3. Standardize, paint, relocate and letter names on mailboxes and addresses on homes.