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RECYCLING CANS INSTALLED IN GARDINER PARK

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Visitors to Majestic Park in Gardiner might notice a new functional art project: brightly painted recycling cans with depictions of Gardiner's public spaces.

A group of local residents saw an opportunity to help the environment and beautify the park with a fun project.

"Our family utilizes Majestic Park year-round; from summer to sledding. We have made so many wonderful memories there, and now we will be able to recycle our cans and bottles on site," Climate Smart Gardiner task force member Suger Rowinski said in a press release. "The addition of recycling bins at the park will lead to a large reduction of waste going to the landfill from our park, and we are happy to be able to make this small contribution to our community."

Gardiner is a Climate Smart community, a New York state program that helps municipalities take actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate. The aluminum recycling cans were donated on behalf of the Climate Smart Gardiner taskforce.

One of the elements of the program is to encourage recycling. Taskforce member Kim Mayer said placing the cans in a public place makes all residents more aware of the practice of recycling and teaches a new generation the importance of protecting the environment.

About 80 percent of municipal solid waste in New York ends up in landfills or municipal waste composters, according to a 2009 report from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Recycling will reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions that landfills contribute to the atmosphere. When recyclable products are thrown in landfills, it wastes the raw materials and energy used to make them.

The cans are in the park's playground, skatepark, pavilion, pole barn and baseball fields. Four of the five cans were installed on June 26.

All five cans and paint, totaling \$150, were purchased with private donations from multiple donors and a discount from Majestic Hardware. One little boy, Levi, donated from his birthday money, Mayer said.

The cans were painted by Gardiner resident Whitney Burns. She said she was excited for other people to see her work and show off Gardiner's beautiful places, including the town hall, the baseball field, the skydiving field and more.

"I'm so happy to be able to add something worthwhile and beautiful to our wonderful park," Burns said in a press release. "Hoping that everyone will enjoy the contribution!"

Gardiner's town board also made sure the cans were secured with chains that tied them to the ground and cables that secured the lids. Councilman David Dukler said the low-cost project is a good way for citizens to engage with the community.

"It's always a plus when community members can step up with a program that benefits the community, the town and this case the environment," Dukler said.

The project also funds the Kindness Award, a scholarship given to Liberty Middle School eighth graders for their exemplary displays of kindness. Retired Special Education teacher Sharyn Fogelman created the Kindness Committee, a handful of teachers that recognized students and staff for acts of kindness. The committee also reached out to individuals who were experiencing a hard time or donated shoes to kids in need.



The cans were donated on behalf of the Climate Smart Gardiner Taskforce.

Fogelman realized the amount of money the school was missing a few years ago when she saw janitors taking unsorted recyclables away.

"I said, 'But there are five cents in there; we can get some money'. And the answer was, 'Well if you wanna do it go for it.' So, I did it," Fogelman said.

Last year, four students received \$50 scholarships funded from Fogelman's recycling efforts.

Fogelman gathers the recyclables every Wednesday and Sunday and sorts out redeemable bottles. She deposits the rest at Gardiner's transfer station. Fogelman said she has gathered about 300 bottles since she started sorting Majestic Park's cans in the beginning of July.

Fogelman said it's good for kids to be recognized for something other than academics. The kids that receive the kindness awards might not receive many other awards and are often very appreciative of it.

"We gave it to one young lady and the look on her face was like 'Me?'" Fogelman said. "I think it really means something to them when they get something like that that they don't see in themselves."

The Kindness Award will be presented next year and for years to come as long as visitors throw their recyclables in one of Majestic Park's colorful cans.

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