

teers used shovels, wheelbarrows and gloved hands to hoist rocks and shift soil along the entrance to the Greater Hazleton Rails to Trails.

The five-hour work project on Saturday was part of a months-long effort by Leadership Hazleton to create an environmental education area at the trail.

Workers started the job before 8 a.m. while wearing sweatshirts and coats against the cool wind, but they finished off in T-shirts after 1 p.m. as the temperature climbed and they worked up a sweat.

When the whole project ends, probably in time for the annual hike, bike and picnic on the trail on June 5, the Leadership Hazleton class will have created a garden with native grasses, a water garden in a swale and a butterfly garden. A path through the area will cross a foot bridge, and signs will point out what's planted in the area and wildlife, including bears, that walkers, bicyclists and skiers might see along the trail.

"This is turning into being one of the best projects on the trail," Bob Skulsky, executive director of the Hazleton Civic Partnership. The partnership oversees construction and activities on the trail that now runs 4 miles from East Broad Street at Route 424 to the former Beryllium Road in the Ashmore section of Hazle Township. This year, the partnership intends to install a bridge over active rail line and extend the trail 2 more miles to Hazlebrook. From there in subsequent years, the partnership wants to secure a route through Eckley and east to the Lehigh River, where at Sandy Run it will tie into the Lehigh Gorge Trail that runs 25 miles from White Haven to Jim Thorpe.

To develop the environmental education area, which is off the parking area on the trailhead at East Broad Street, the class of Leadership Hazleton began planning last September.

The class started with \$375 and raised the equivalent of approximately \$10,000 in donations of cash, materials and labor, Pat Korb, the executive director of Leadership Hazleton, said.



JAMIE PESOTINE/Staff Photographer

Shawna Christina and Katie Dowd pick up rocks to line mulch around memorial trees along Greater Hazleton Rails to Trails project, during a workday on Saturday morning. Members of Leadership Hazleton, local students, Rails to Trails supporters and the Hazleton City Authority took part in maintaining the trail, hanging signs, and beginning work on the environmental education area.

In addition to 10 members of this year's Leadership Hazleton class, high school students volunteered to help on Saturday. Other students in the Hazleton Area Career Center are building a footbridge to cross the swale where the water garden will be.

Students in elementary school have planted seeds in their classroom that they will transplant to the garden.

The Hazleton City Authority provided workers and heavy equipment

to help move soil on Saturday around memorial trees that the Civic Partnership planted parallel to the trail.

Landscape architect Krista Schneider and Gregg Pavlick, both from Barry Isett and Associates, provided a basic plan for the educational area, which Leadership Hazleton Class members modified.

"They've had to do a lot of research," Korb said. "In this project, they have

to do a lot of labor."

Leadership class members also will install benches, a fence and signs.

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