Gold Thumb sponsors are, from left: Krista Schneider, and Gegg Pavlick of Barry Isett and Associates; John Spevak and Nancy Stasko, of the CAN DO Foundation; Nina Temchatin and Terri Bissol, PNC Bank, and Heather Nenstiel, Leadership Hazleton project member. Representatives from the Hazleton City Authority and the Pennsylvania DCNR Growing Greener Grant, Poconos Forest and Waters Conservation Landscape weren't present for the photo.

Leadership Hazleton class is close to finishing environmental education area

One of two community service projects being developed by the Leadership Hazleton Class of 2009-2010 is an environmental education area for Rails to Trails, Route 93, Hazleton.

Bob Skulsky executive director of the Greater Hazleton Civic Partnership, approached Pat Korb, executive director of Leadership Hazleton, with a request that the class develop this area which is located near the entrance to the Rails to Trails on Route 93.

Ten people in the class signed on and have been working on the project since September. The 10 class members and their Leadership Hazleton sponsors are: Michele Fisher, Mystic Yoga Studio and Commission on Economic Opportunity Scholarship; Dianne French, Greater Hazleton Association of Realtors; Tamara Huey, Valley Tutor and YWCA Scholarship; Nancy Mensinger, Leader Services; Heather Nenstiel, City of Hazleton; Al Onuschak, PPL; Jose Rodriguez, GHHA and Luzerne Foundation Scholarships; Tony Sandutch, Hazleton Area School District; Joan Siepietowski, Luzerne County Community College, and Nina Temchatin, PNC Bank.

Project facilitator is Skulsky. Korb is project assistant.

The project will include five native grasses, Indian grass, little blue stem, switch grass, northern sea oats and wild rye.

"The original components of the plan provided on paper are still the same" explained Tony Sandutch, "We just had to rearrange some of these components to better fir the physical layout of the garden."

"For example, a water garden will be included, but will be planted in the current swale rather than trying to divert and rearrange the swale and it was decided that one pedestrian bridge instead of two would better accommodate the area," added Heather Nenstiel. "Interpretive signage and several rotating perennial plant areas for invited elementary students to plant, benches to relax and enjoy the garden, a fence and boulders, a walking trail within the area which will allow for wheelchairs etc. and a butterfly garden are still part of the plan."

"The whole team has been committed

Other Gold Thumb sponsors include Eagle Rock Resort. Representing the resort are, from left: Daniel Durange, construction foreman, and John Grohol, senior construction manager.

to this project," commented Joan Siepietowski, "and we can't begin to say thank you enough to all of our donors who are making it possible."

"We've had some fantastic donations," said Dianne French, "such as Eagle Rock Resort who not only donated some boulders from their location, but delivered and placed them as well."

Gold Thumb donors are Security Savings Community Foundation, Frank and Christine Cabell, Rick and Lynn Patton, City of Hazleton, Conyngham Valley Kiwanis Club, Greater Hazleton Association of Realators, J&S Landscaping, Kulaga Trucking, LCCC Alumni Association, Leader Data Processing Employees, McCarrie Custom Homes, Bob and Heather Nenstiel and family, Northeast PT Associates Inc., Radznel's Outdoor Specialties, Charles Zaremba, Valley Tutor, Visintainer Nursery, Walko Landscaping and Gardening, and J. Busch and Sons Trucking.

Materials and labor for the pedestrian bridge were provided by the Hazleton Area Career Center and students from the Career Center donated hours of labor.

The benches were gifts of Gould's Supermarket Inc. and Leader Data Processing. Additional funding was provided by George Puhak and Edward Dudeck.

The goal is to complete the project by National Trails Day on June 5.

For more information, contact Korb or Skulsky at 455-1509.