

## Camden Youth Garden Club recognized for work on The Trace

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Pictured from left is Candace Carrie, Abbie Hobbie, Frank Wietecha, McCoy Dobbins, Helen Pope, Camden Mayor Julian Lott, Jenkins Dobbins and Dalton Dobbins.

CAMDEN — By Patric Flannigan

Staff writer

A group of youth has taken it upon themselves to conduct a project to help beautify one of Camden's biggest attractions.

Connections Academy students Abbie Hobbie, McCoy Dobbins, Dalton Dobbins, Jenkins Dobbins and Helen Pope make up the Camden Youth Garden Club and were celebrated recently for their work spearheading plant installations along The Trace. Abbie, 13, spoke to the Camden News about how the project came to fruition.

"We are in an online based school called Connections Academy and our teacher wanted us to do something that would benefit our community," Abbie shared. "So the first thing we thought of was The Trace because everyone

spends a lot of time on this and it looks really great. We all thought that maybe we could add plants or something to make it pizzazz up a little bit. We got together with the Master Gardeners and Mr. Frank (Wietecha) from Four Seasons and we just all talked together to figure out where would be a great place to plant some things. Mr. Frank thought of planting Daffodils and doing a Crape Myrtle here. By the time March comes you'll see a lot of beautiful Daffodils throughout the different parts of The Trace and then you'll get here and there will be a little spot where we planted some."

Abbie further explained that the project is a full semester and the group will have to record and collect even the smallest bit of data and present it to their instructors at the end.

Camden Mayor Julian Lott was in attendance and commended the group for their initiative and emphasized the importance of what the students were doing. He joked that if the group of students chose to go anywhere other than SAU Tech then they will have to move back to Camden after college so their children can see the work they have done.

"One day, your children and grandchildren will know that you were here and that when you were young, you were focused on making Camden better," Lott said. "You were willing at a young age to put in the work that adults may not want to. This is 2.1 miles of playground and exercises equipment - by the end of the year - and now you have added to the beauty of it and helping to bring more fresh air to our community."

"I really hope that this encourages people to take care of the planet and do something good for somebody," Abbie responded.

The area where the Crape Myrtle has been planted is near The Trace crossing on Jackson Street. A sign encouraging preserving The Trace was also installed near the site.

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