CAMDEN — By Patric Flannigan

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 were 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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