

Centennial High plants love, conquers hate amid daffodils

ROSWELL



Centennial High School students plant 500 daffodil bulbs around the flagpole in 2019 as part of the school's participation in The Daffodil Project.

COURTESY

**By H.M. Cauley
For the AJC**

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Two years ago, students and staff showed up at Centennial High to discover the building had been defaced with swastikas, including a large one on the building's exterior. The incident led to the Roswell school becoming a No Place for Hate program and joining in the international effort called The Daffodil Project.

"We were already talking about the project when that happened," said Lisa Scaun, a Centennial parent who had presented the idea to the school's PTSA. Scaun is a teacher at Webb Bridge Middle and a Daffodil Ambassador who works with North Fulton schools to implement the

project she discovered four years ago.

“My son was having his bar mitzvah, and, typically, they do a community service project as part of that,” she said. “That’s how we stumbled across it.”

The initiative is part of a worldwide program to spread Holocaust education by establishing a living memorial to the 1.5 million children who died in Nazi Germany. Groups who participate agree to plant the bright yellow bulbs that blossom into shapes resembling the yellow stars Jewish citizens were forced to wear. The effort, launched in Atlanta in 2010, has resulted in the planting of about 600,000 bulbs in 230 locations worldwide.

“The daffodil was a very deliberate choice,” said Scaun. “The specific bulbs we plant reflect a star shape.

And they are extremely resilient; they come up year after year, which ties into the idea of hope and resiliency.

They’re also not here very long. They bloom, and then they’re gone, which is very poignant.”

The flag pole area in front of Centennial became a Daffodil Project site in spring 2019, when first-year students, athletes and members of the student council and Jewish Student Union came together to plant 500 bulbs.

The goal was to have a dedication ceremony last spring, but the pandemic put that event on hold. Volunteers planted another 250 bulbs in December, and now Scaun looks forward to a dedication in a few weeks. When it happens, it will mark Centennial as the only public high school in Fulton County to have a daffodil garden, Scaun said.

“In Georgia, the Holocaust is taught in sixth grade social studies, but by high school, kids are getting farther away from it,” said Scaun. “I try to get ninth graders who have had Holocaust education to plant so it’s a natural sequence.”

Centennial’s flagpole area has room for 1,000 daffodils, Scaun said, and she hopes to organize plantings of at least 250 a year to make that goal.

“We’re going out in concentric circles, and if we need to, we have other areas we can move to,” she said.

Along with plantings, the public can support the project through the Daffodil Dash Run/Walk, an annual fundraiser being held virtually this year from Friday to April 18. Registration is open at [runsignup.com/Race/GA/ Dunwoody/DAFFODILDASH](https://runsignup.com/Race/GA/Dunwoody/DAFFODILDASH).