

https://observer-reporter.com/news/localnews/washington-business-district-to-partner-with-arc-on-beautification/article_667c560a-32be-11e8-af91-4f14df0d6b31.html

SPOTLIGHT

Washington Business District to partner with Arc on beautification

Katie Anderson Mar 30, 2018 Updated Mar 30, 2018



Photo courtesy of Tara Johnson

Members of Arc Human Services of Washington County recently campaigned to “End the R-Word” at the Washington Crown Center mall.

Washington Business District Authority will have a new beautification team this spring, as it is partnering with Arc Human Services of Washington County.

About 10 people who work through Arc will be tidying up the streets in Washington’s business district and bringing colorful greenery and flowers to planters and beds around town.

“I think we’ll be able to improve what we’ve been putting into the downtown streetscape,” said Sarah Collier, Main Street manager for the business district. “Flowers make people happy and make things look nice.”

Collier said the district is about 14 square blocks, from Walnut Street to the railroad tracks just past Maiden Street, and from Franklin to College Streets. She said the beautification team will concentrate on the nearly 100 planters and beds within that area that are publicly owned.

The district had previously hired seasonal employees to do street sweeping and beautification tasks, but when the opportunity presented itself, she said they were happy to partner with Arc.

“It was a terrific deal,” Collier said.

She said the authority has a contract with Arc to make monthly payments for the work that five to 10 people will do. Arc will then pay those people “outright” through Arc’s small-group employment service, according to Tara Johnson, Arc’s assistant director of community-based services.

“They’ll be making minimum wage, and it gets them out in the community and gives them interaction with people and a chance to improve their skills,” Johnson said. “This is a step in the direction of having them hired outright by companies and businesses.”

Johnson said the program allows for a supervisor to take groups of three people into the community to do different types of jobs. One project they did last year and plan to do again this season is cleaning up and maintaining blighted properties in the city.

Collier said she hopes the team can start next week, depending on weather, sweeping the sidewalks and cleaning up leaves and debris. She said the flowers and planting probably won’t begin until mid-May, after they consult with local growers on which plants to choose.

Johnson and Collier said the partnership could not have happened at a better time, as March is Intellectual-Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. Johnson said Arc has spent much of the month focused on the national “End the R-Word” campaign. They’ve had special speakers advocate for the campaign at Washington Crown Center, Citizens Library and in Chartiers Township. They also put out a video series, asking some of their clients how the word “retard” makes them feel.

“Not everybody realizes, they’re just like you and I,” Johnson said. “They have the same desires.”

Katie Anderson

Staff Writer