

Scout's Project Completes Derby School's Image

MARIANNE LIPPARD, Correspondent Connecticut Post Oct 6, 2005

DERBY — A new sign outside Bradley School shows that it's never too late to make a statement.

A resourceful 15-year-old Eagle Scout candidate made his mark on the school by designing a cheerful sign that now sits at the front of the school. The school, built in the 1960's, never had a sign out front.

The large green sign near the driveway has white lettering with the words "Bradley Elementary School" surrounded by a wooden border. Below the sign is a landscaped plot with perennials and a gray brick border.

Drew Thompson, a sophomore at Shelton High School and member of Boy Scout Troop 3 in Derby, managed to get everything needed to build the sign — from the wood to the Dwarf Alberta spruces underneath it — donated by area businesses.

Bridgeport Lumber, Herde Construction of Oxford, Innovative Display and Design of Bridgeport and Marcucio Gardens of Derby were among the companies that helped Thompson create the sign, while the city of Derby purchased paint and landscaping fabric.

"The object is to lead a group of individuals in doing something for the community," said Thompson about the Eagle Scout project, adding that he began working toward his goal of creating the sign back in April.

Thompson put about 100 hours of work into the project. Much of the work involved soliciting businesses for donations, carving out letters using a computer-controlled machine and meticulously painting inside and outside the lettering.

Bradley School Principal Linda Coppola said she saw a need for a sign shortly after she was hired as principal at the school last year and immediately thought it would make a great Eagle Scout project. Although there are words identifying the school on the outside of the building, Coppola said that she felt that a sign would enhance the appearance out front and make the school easier to locate from David Humphreys Road.

Coppola said that she was impressed with how Thompson went through all the proper channels in the city government to get permission for the sign and even got help from two Bradley School sixth-graders, Tyler and Chuck Stankye. Since the sign was completed, Coppola said that she has enjoyed hearing compliments from the school community.

"It is fabulous. It is striking," she said.

Only about 2 percent of Boy Scouts go on to become Eagle Scouts, said Thompson's father, Jason, who recently became the scoutmaster for Troop 3 and works at one of the companies that allowed Drew to use sign-making equipment.

Jason Thompson noted that his own involvement with the project was limited to acting as a "chauffeur."

"We're very proud of him. I encourage any Scout interested in becoming an Eagle Scout to pursue it in a timely manner."

Mayor Marc Garofalo, who attended the school as a child, said he never recalls any sign out front.

"It really is a nice addition," he said.

Garofalo added that Eagle Scouts have contributed their talents to a variety of useful projects over the years, some of which have had less visibility, but nevertheless provided much-needed services.