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Volunteers from Providence College spent part of Saturday's day of community service sprucing up the baseball fields at the Jamestown schools.  
Photo courtesy of Carol Crafts

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## Volunteers

Continued from page 1

"building bridges" between the island and the college.

But Szeptowski is determined to make sure that last Saturday's day of selfless stewardship will not be the last.

"We want people to do more than just come home and pay their taxes," Szeptowski said. "I am sure, if you asked the taxpayers if they would be willing to fund two more recreation department employees, that most would probably say no, due to financial concerns. We are all worried about finances, and I understand that. But to those who take their quality of life in Jamestown for granted, I would say, 'Pitch in, meet some great people and let's make our town even more awesome!'"

Szeptowski said many Jamestowners already "walk the walk," and added, "We need to pull those people together." The people she has in mind for the service corps are not exclusively adults. In fact,

her inspiration for the service corps came from some kids and teenagers she met while operating her shop, Paws and Claws.

"I love working with kids, including the kids and teens who sometimes get into trouble," Szeptowski said. "During the years I had Paws and Claws, some of those kids asked me if they could do their community service at my shop - such as cleaning out cages and things like that. So, I had the thought that it would be great if kids doing enforced community service could do their service alongside adults who were volunteering their time for the good of the town. What a positive influence on the kids that would be! So, I absolutely want those kids directed to our group once we're up and running."

Once the service corps is running, Szeptowski intends to focus more sharply on her other endeavors. To that end, she said, "In October, I will be approaching the council, along with a non-profit, to make an offer for the former town offices at 44 Southwest Ave.

I am hoping we can purchase the buildings on that lot and convert them into a nature center and animal shelter - with the understanding that dogs would not be quartered overnight unless we build a soundproof room for them."

Szeptowski, who has an expired three-year-old permit for an animal-shelter conversion at the town property, is also poised to propose a second - and decidedly different - project.

"A retired individual on the island has stepped forward with an offer to help us add a non-profit board and fund-raising organization to the recreation and teen centers," she said. "We will be proposing this to the council in October. If it goes forward, William Piva would serve on the board of directors of the non-profit - and the board would answer to the recreation department. Our argument [to the council] will be that non-profit status will ensure that the recreation and teen center programs are always adequately funded, and that new programs can be added without having to worry about costs, and that the programs are always free."

Given the tremendous amount of work that she has put on her plate, is it fair to assume that Szeptowski has closed out her political career?

"I am not ruling out a run [for Town Council] down the road, but, at this point, there's no way I would have time to serve on the council and launch these projects," she said. "So, for the next three years, I hope to be working on these ideas, but I want to stress that these projects aren't about me. They are about the way we steward our island."

Szeptowski wants to see the playground at the library finished before the weather becomes cold.

"Painting and weeding play dates," have been scheduled from 1 to 4:30 p.m., weather permitting, for the next two Sundays, Sept. 13 and Sept. 20. All tools and equipment will be provided, she said.

The Jamestown service corps, which has not yet been officially named, will have a table at the Friends of the Library volunteer night from 7 to 9 p.m. on Oct. 14. Szeptowski urged all Jamestowners with an interest in donating some of their free time and skills to visit and sign up for a project, or to call her at 354-9200.

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