Lafayette group seeks to put Azalea Trail back on the map

BY RICHARD BURGESS
rburgess@theadvocate.com

It was touted in a 1950s brochure as "one of the greatest floral treats in the South" and a "display of such breathtaking floral color and beauty that it cannot be described in words," but Lafayette's Azalea Trail hasn't attracted much attention lately.

The beautification group Scenic Lafayette now hopes to revitalize the Azalea Trail in Acadiana.

Catherine S. Comeaux, left, and Jen Badeaux, both members of the Myrtle Place Parent Teacher Organization, help plant azalea bushes on the school grounds. The planting is part of an effort headed by Scenic Lafayette to revitalize the Azalea Trail in Acadiana.
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CHERYL PERRET, Scenic Lafayette chairwoman

The Azalea Trail revival

Catherine S. Comeaux, a member of the Myrtle Place Parent Teacher Organization, helps plant donated azalea bushes Friday on the grounds of Myrtle Place Elementary School in Lafayette. The planting is part of an effort headed by Scenic Lafayette to revitalize The Azalea Trail in Acadiana.

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it has been seriously promoted, Faul said. "It fell through the cracks," she said. "It just kind of stopped being advertised."

But many of the old azaleas are still there, even if residents and business owners along the historic trail have forgotten or never knew about it.

"We just need to spruce it up," Faul said.

Perret and Faul have been spearheading an outreach effort to renew interest in the trail, going door to door to hundreds of homes along the old route.

"We are trying to get people to be aware they are on the trail, to preserve what’s on the trail and to ask them to plant more," Perret said.

So far, Faul said, the response has been enthusiastic.

"We found a lot of people did not know that their home was on the trail, but they were delighted to find out," she said.

There also has been interest in new plantings.

Several hundred azaleas were donated for the project, Perret said, and earlier this month, volunteers planted about 50 azaleas at a list of locations that included Myrtle Place Elementary, the Lafayette Convention and Visitors Commission and several private homes.

Azaleas don't bloom until the spring, but now is the time to plant them, Faul said.

Scenic Lafayette plans to formally relaunch the Azalea Trail in March, and Perret said there are plans to update the original self-guided driving tour with smaller trail loops for walkers and bicyclists.

"We are trying to build on the early work but bring it in to the new millennium," Faul said.

For more information, visit www.facebook.com/ScenicLafayette.