Cheryl Perret, chairwoman of Scenic Lafayette, right, and June Faul, chairwoman for the Azalea Trail revitalization project, take fliers about the effort to revitalize the trail door to door Wednesday in the Sterling Grove neighborhood of Lafayette.

ON THE TRAIL OF BEAUTY

Perret and Faul speak with motorist Kim Voorhies, whose family owns a nearby historic home, about the possibility of planting azaleas on the property. The historic 20-mile Azalea Trail was introduced in the 1930s as a driving tour, and now a revitalization effort seeks to bring the trail back by encouraging residents in neighborhoods along the trail to take care of existing azaleas and to plant new ones. More information on the effort can be found on the ScenicLafayette Facebook page.
"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."

CHERYL PERRET, Scenic Lafayette chairwoman

The Azalea Trail revival

The Azalea Trail 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.

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.

Advocate staff photo by LESLIE WESTBROOK

Source: Scenic Lafayette

TRAIL

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Advocate graphic

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