

Keowee Key community earns rare wildlife habitat certification

BY JASON EVANS
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SALEM — Keowee Key has been recognized for creating a community where people and wildlife can both flourish.

The community has been named a Community Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation.

“We are so proud to be the only certified community in the Upstate of South Carolina,” Lakes

and Hills Garden Club member and Keowee Key property owner Alice Guzick said. “This award shows the dedication of individuals in our community to conservation and preservation of their natural surroundings.”

Keowee Key is the fifth community in South Carolina to receive the designation, and the 112th community in the nation to do so.

“We had our certification party today,” market-

ing manager Christine de Vlaming said Wednesday. “We had a beautiful picnic in one of our certified habitats.”

A Community Wildlife Habitat project creates multiple habitat areas in backyards, schoolyards, corporate properties, community gardens, parkland and other spaces, according to a news release.

A Community Wildlife Habitat benefits the entire

community of plants, wildlife and people through the creation of sustainable landscapes that require little or no pesticides, fertilizers and excess watering, according to a statement from de Vlaming. The statement said the landscapes help keep water and air resources clean, making it healthier for people and the environment, and they are less resource-dependent than conventional landscapes.

Four of Keowee Key’s common areas have been certified, de Vlaming said. She added that 88 Keowee Key property owners have certified their backyards.

Earning the designation for the community became a priority this year. Some property owners earned certifications 15 years ago, de Vlaming said.

Guzick and the Lakes and Hills Garden Club led the effort.

“They did the work behind it,” de Vlaming said. “It took them most of this year.”

She said habitats have to meet a number of qualifications to earn certification.

“They have to make sure they have plants that are natural to the state of South Carolina,” de Vlaming said. “It has to be friendly to small creatures, so they wouldn’t be using pesticides or anything that’s damaging to the homes of small creatures.”

She added that projects must also remove invasive species, such as kudzu or English ivy “that can take over and push out other plants.”

To earn a community certification, a few more qualifications are added, including educational activities, keeping track of the community members’ certifications, as well as learning about NWF programs and outreach, according to de Vlaming.

The certification celebration was the first of many events planned during October, de Vlaming said. This month, a number of projects in the community will officially open, including a new bistro and golf range and putting green.

The construction projects in the community didn’t create obstacles in the pursuit of the Community Wildlife Habitat certification.

“We have all the proper barriers in place for construction,” she said. “The plants in the landscaping were picked out for being able to thrive here.”

To learn more about certifying your backyard as a wildlife habitat, visit nwf.org/certify.

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Keowee Key has been recognized for its dedication to preservation.



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Sara Green of the National Wildlife Federation presents the Community Habitat Certificate to Alice Guzick, a Keowee Key resident who spearheaded the application for the community.