

# Cleaning up, helping out



PHOTOS BY SAVANNAH BLAKE | THE JOURNAL

Volunteers paint various portions of the new mural at Monarch Park in Seneca on Friday morning for the United Way Day of Action event.

# Day of Action volunteers spruce up local parks, homes

**BY CAITLIN HERRINGTON**  
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**SENECA** — Volunteers grabbed gloves, shovels and paintbrushes Friday morning to do their part to clean up and beautify Oconee County as part of the United Way's national Day of Action.

Local United Way director LaShauna Harrison said four projects took place Friday morning and another is happening this morning at Collins Children's Home. She was overwhelmed by the participation at the various sites across Oconee.

"For most of them, we had maybe five or six people sign up, and then twice that show up," she said. "In Westminster, we had 15 show up. It's been a variety of age groups, from little children to older adults. It's not one specific group. We've seen great turnout of people showing up and helping out."

Volunteers cleaned up the Walhalla City Park, picked up litter in West Union, built a wheelchair ramp for a veteran in West Union and tackled a



**Swati Vasoya and her daughters, 16-year-old Aneri Vasoya, left, and 7-year-old Nina Patel help paint a portion of the new mural at Monarch Park on Friday morning.**

beautification project in Seneca.

"Duke retirees did a ramp for a veteran in West Union," Harrison said. "They do volunteer work all year round, but picked this one for Day of Action."

This is a national day of volunteering. It always happens on June 21, which is solstice and the longest day of the year."

More than a dozen people took on the trash in downtown Westminster, Seneca saw the most

colorful Day of Action by far, as volunteers spent the morning painting a mural on the fence line at Monarch Park near downtown. City of Seneca planner Ed Halbig said the project has been a long time coming, and he was glad to have extra hands to make lots of progress Friday.

"This project has been two years in the making, easily," Halbig said. "We've only got an acre, so we said let's make something that's more of a natural area ... so Monarch Park just kind of sprung from that."

A local Boy Scout looking for an Eagle Scout project built the fence last summer, Halbig said, and students at Seneca Middle School designed the mural that now graces it.

"We basically had a clear shot to the plumbing store," Halbig said of the park's view. "So the fence will act as background."

Harrison said the emphasis of the day is on philanthropy and volunteerism, but the timing of it offers a chance to pass those values on to the next generation.

"We love to see students

out here," she said. "With them being out of school for the summer, it offers a chance for them to start giving back to the community and really being a part of it. They really get a chance to see how good it makes you feel to give your time and effort to something."

The butterfly mural at Monarch Park will soon be graced with metal butterflies from the Hamilton Career Center, Blue Ridge Arts Center director Suzette Cross said. They will be painted by BRAC members and grace the park ahead of the butterfly garden installation.

"We just want to have an additional offering to the sports and recreation options we have," Halbig said. "It's more of a passive park, and we're working toward making it a great place for the community to come and visit and just hang out. It's been a true team effort to get this far, and Day of Action volunteers — and all the other volunteers — are a crucial part of that."