

Crawford cultivates community inspiration

By Kevin Mullaney

BANNER CORRESPONDENT

TRURO — The community center is aptly named. Home of the Council on Aging and recreation department, the facility plays a big part in the lives of both young and old, and it has also brought people together in ways that were not part of the original plan — most notably, with the construction of Puma Park last year and, more recently, the children's garden.

The last detail to be addressed has been the landscaping, and bringing all the parties together had been a slow process until local landscaper Candy Crawford got involved.

"We were figuring out what we wanted to do, kicking around ideas," said COA director Susan Travers. The COA had a small budget and a landscaping committee, and the recreation department, library and Puma Park people were also involved. Then Travers bumped into Crawford and the two got to talking. Crawford wanted to help.

"I had a lot of plants that needed homes," Crawford said, calling the area around the community center "a big bare spot that needed landscaping." She started going to the meetings and used her expertise to bring it all together. "I'm used to working with all sorts of people. That's my job," she said.

Crawford pulled together what they had to work with and spoke about what could be done, showing pictures of the vegetation she was talking about.

"Anna gave a lot of input," she said of Anna Duarte, who also helped. "We really complemented each other."

Crawford said they had lots of plants — day lilies, catmint, butterfly bushes, sedum, hibiscus — as well as cypress and dogwood trees. Duarte donated the grasses, she said, and the COA paid for the trees.

Like hundreds of others, Crawford, who owns Handy Candyco Landscaping, volunteered to help build Puma Park and said the experience was inspiring. "It was the first time I've felt a connection in Truro since we moved here in 1989. I was so inspired, and I know I'm not the



PHOTO KEVIN MULLANEY

Susan Travers (left), COA director, and landscaper Candy Crawford.

only one," she said, chuckling at the memory of teaching an 80-year-old woman to use a router.

Crawford also remembered one beautiful sunny afternoon when she asked her sons if they wanted to live their lives in Truro and they said no. "There's no sense of community," they told her. "The sense of belonging wasn't that strong," she said, and she wanted to do something about it.

"One point of the [landscaping] project was to get kids involved," Crawford said, to bridge the divide between the generations at the community center. "Kids love to dig holes and get dirty."

So the kids from the recreation program and the new 4-H program helped do the planting.

"It was fantastic, the enthusiasm," she said. She envisions the kids in a few years looking over and saying "I planted that tree." It happened to me when Puma Park was built and I hope it happens to them."

"Wow," Crawford said. "It's gone way past what I expected."

"She's awesome," Travers said of Crawford. "We needed irrigation. She organized it. The patio area, she organized that too."

Travers said the COA simply wanted something that was going to flower a lot, look neat and keep sand down — "a nice place to sit." Now nearly completed, Travers said she gets nothing but compliments.

"She's been incredible. She's out there three or four days a week," said Kelley Sullivan, recreation director. "It flows better, she added color to the commemorative circle. The grass will be down by end of August and we'll have a garden party in September or October."

"They've been trying to get the area around the community center landscaped for two years," said Curtis Hartman, chair of the board of selectmen, calling Crawford's efforts "a wonderful story about community