

Volunteers take pride in battling overgrowth around town

September 3, 2020



As Crescent City’s senior park and building maintenance worker, Dustin Loudahl used to have a dozen members on his crew.

Loudahl said he takes pride in keeping Crescent City looking its best.

“I know everything I do every day makes my granddaughter happy,” he said.

But due to personnel cutbacks and departures, now he and a crew of only three are responsible for the upkeep of more than 80 acres around town.

However, Loudahl has had help over the last eight weeks — volunteers from Pride In Community (PIC) group.

Del Norte County Supervisor Roger Gitlin said he saw high traffic areas of Crescent City's streets looking unkempt, with weeds growing unchecked. So he took off his hat as representative of the county's First District and threw on his volunteer cap to form PIC.

"The city has been severely hurt by COVID. I know their staff has been limited, so I let City Manager Eric Wier know I was willing to help," Gitlin said.

Using no public funds, Gitlin put a call for volunteers and the community answered. His PIC group has gotten together every Wednesday, armed with donated string trimmers, shovels and brooms. Eventually, businesses started chipping in sponsorships to the cleanup efforts, including Ocean World, Les Schwab, California Auto Image and Tab Commercial Properties.

Among the dozen or so volunteers on Sept. 2 was Matthew Kays, owner of Kays Yard Service. He usually does maintenance at SeaQuake's property. The restaurant's owner, Matt Wakefield, asked him to pitch in to help PIC.

"It's a good idea, especially with the city low on money, to get volunteers willing and able to do something," Kays said while taking a string trimmer to the taller grass around Brother Jonathan Cemetery. "It helps keep the community looking better."

Linda Sutter, who likes to keep an eye on government activities at the city and county levels, couldn't stand the sight of weeds growing wild around town. This day, she was up to her ankles in thick carpobrotus, also known as pig face or ice plants, that had overgrown by three feet onto the sidewalk near the barbecue pits on Beachfront Park.

"Somebody's got to do it," Sutter said, adding she's volunteered for each PIC event so far. "It makes me sad the city has been let go for so long."

Gitlin hopes PIC inspires private property owners to do their part maintaining their own areas adjacent city curbs, gutters and streets.

"I've been ecstatic by the turnout," Gitlin said. "It shows people take pride in their community, they think highly of their community and that makes this more of an exciting place to live and visit."

It's definitely has Loudahl's thanks.

"It's been a huge, huge help, for sure," he said.

Gitlin invites volunteers to join PIC each week until Sea Cruise Oct. 9 at 10 a.m. at the Battery Point parking lot at Battery Street and Lighthouse Way.