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From left: John Bruni, Linda Grucel, D.D. Warren, Bob Santoro, Wendy McVey and Amy Grucel Spivack at the North Conway Community Center. (JAMIE GEMMITI PHOTO)

NCCC garden dedicated to Grucel

By TOM EASTMAN
THE CONWAY DAILY SUN

CONWAY — Members of the Mountain Garden Club on Wednesday cel-

ebrated getting recognized by the New Hampshire chapter of National Federation of Garden Clubs for their landscaping project undertaken last summer at

the North Conway Community Center.

The club has received the state chapter's "Best Community Improvement

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Project for New Hampshire" award.

As part of the ceremonies, NCCC Director Ryan Sommer and District 1 Executive Councilor Joe Kenney (R-Wakefield) helped dedicate a garden at the center in honor of Roger Grucel, the community center's assistant



Roger Grucel

director who died in April 2016 at age 69 after 28 years of service.

A plaque was presented to Grucel's family. It will be placed on what would have been his office door at the new \$1.7 million center.

It reads: "The front garden of the North Conway Community Center was created by the Mountain Garden Club in memory of Roger Grucel."

"Roger was a community treasure," said Mountain Garden Club President Wendy McVey. "Though he never wanted an office (preferring to spend his time outside), we are going to place this plaque there."

On hand for the ceremonies were Grucel's wife, Linda Grucel, and daughter, Amy Grucel Spivack. They said the garden is a great tribute to the late sports- and nature-loving Cubs fan.

"Roger would have loved this garden," said Linda.

Added club board member D.D. Warren of Jackson, whose husband/board member John Bruni had conceived of the garden club project at the center, "We all just loved Roger — he was such a spirit of the center and he was so helpful to us with our annual holiday boutique ... When he passed away, we wanted to keep that spirit alive, which is why we designed

the garden out front — we needed his soul out there!"

Bruni said the garden and landscaping project meet the club's goals of "promoting horticultural education, civic beautification and conservation. It was a perfect project for the club," he said.

McVey and club Vice President Deborah Holmes said the garden features hydrangeas, Rose of Sharon bushes and other plants, including a paper birch. They were purchased at McSherry's Nursery of Center Conway, one of several businesses that supported the \$5,000 community project.

Sommer thanked club members and those contributing businesses and organizations for helping to transform the grounds.

"The grounds look so beautiful. This project is what North Conway is all about — people coming together for a project that may not have a lot to do with them personally but which is all about the good of the community," he said. "As the person who gets to work here and enjoy this every day, from the bottom of my heart, I thank you."

Getting special recognition was Mountain Garden Club board member/environmental chairman Bob Santoro, a summer resident of Jackson.

In fall 2015, after meeting with Sommer and the club, Santoro was asked by Bruni to direct the project.

At first, club members were not very familiar with Santoro, who said he had done a lot of landscaping in California — but in time, they became believers.

The original idea among club members was for it to be a two- or three-year project, McVey related. But Santoro soon came up with an ambitious schedule for it to be a one-summer, six-week project, and he made good, arriving early every morning to work with volunteers and businesses.

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Mountain Garden Club member Bob Santoro (right) discusses the community center's new landscaping project with Chris Bales of Casella Organics of Saco, Maine. (TOM EASTMAN PHOTO)

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"This project would not have happened without Bob Santoro," McVey noted, "as he designed it, got the materials, delegated it and directed members."

Santoro designed the walkway and drainage bridge at the site, adding river rock and designing the irrigation work, getting contractors to donate materials or to provide them at significant discounts. Others provided services or equipment.

Donating five benches to the project was Home Depot of North Conway, which also donated employee volunteer labor at a work day last August, along with \$8,400 in materials. Each

bench has a bronze plaque, representing each branch of the armed services.

The Pequawket Foundation gave a \$1,000 donation that paid for the turf, which was discounted by Maine Turf Co. of Fryeburg.

Thanked by Santoro were: Alvin J. Coleman & Son Inc., Bartlett Tree Experts, Casella Organics, Collier Metal Specialties Ltd., Eastern Green Inc., Frechette Tire, Maine Turf Co., McSherry's Nursery, North Conway Country Club, North Conway Water Precinct, Paris Farmers Union, Russ Lanoie, SiteOne Landscape Supply Inc., the Home Depot-North Conway and the Pequawket Foundation.

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