

## Geneva Beautification Committee History

The present day Geneva Beautification Committee sprang from a city-wide residential, commercial and industrial Beautification contest held in the early 1990s that encouraged the sprucing up of homes and buildings. From those beginnings the seed of a thought was planted and a group of local businessmen and residents headed by Alderman Paul DesCoteaux decided that the post office would be the perfect next step in beautifying our downtown.

Working with post office officials, Geneva businesses, and a group of local landscape architects, the grounds surrounding the post office were designed to have brick paved paths, flowering shrubs and blossoming plants. That project was so popular with residents and visitors that it grew in 1996 to encompass State Street.

That was the time that the Fox River bridge was reconstructed and State Street was redesigned. Traffic-calming devices called 'knuckles' were installed at the corners on State Street. Instead of bricking the 'knuckles', Paul DesCoteaux and the Beautification Group realized the opportunity to further expand the gardens in downtown Geneva and recruited volunteers to plant flowers and shrubs at the intersections. Soon after that, Third Street received a new streetscape and some of those corners were added to the growing number of downtown gardens.

For quite a few years, thousands of plants and flowers were generously donated annually by Geneva Greenhouse for the gardens. Once they closed their doors, the Geneva Beautification Committee had to resort to fundraising to be able to purchase the necessary plants and planting materials. The community supports their fundraising efforts by making monetary and plant donations and participating in the Geneva Tour des Fleurs fundraiser. Past fundraisers such as the Pasta for Posies Spaghetti Supper and face cord and bundled firewood purchases have also added to the funds needed to support their mission.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Co-Chairs, Dorothy Flanagan and Sherri Weitzl, the Geneva Beautification Committee continued to grow and expand after Paul DesCoteaux's passing. For approximately twenty years, Dorothy and Sherri kept Geneva looking beautiful with all types of flowering plants. After their retirement in 2018, four long-time Geneva residents, Kristie Dienst, Janice Lucchetti, Kathy McNeil and Jena Villarreal, took over the trowels passed down to them by Sherri and Dorothy. To date, the Geneva Beautification Committee boasts well over one hundred and fifty volunteers that are responsible for planting and maintaining over fifty gardens in downtown Geneva. A core group of about 24 volunteers oversee the daily operations but the majority of the planting and tending is carried out by a dedicated group of residents (even some non-residents), businesses and local organizations. Add to those volunteers many individual residents, two- and three-generation family groups and local businesses and it is evident that the people of Geneva are proud of their town and are willing to donate their talents and many hours of time to keep their town looking BEAUTIFUL!

For information and to find out how you can help, check the Geneva Beautification web site at [www.PlantGeneva.com](http://www.PlantGeneva.com).