GUEST COLUMN
A beautiful impact

When you get right down to it, beauty is a powerful thing. Everyone recognizes it when they experience it, and beauty can have an enormous impact on how people see the world. They can find majesty in an Oklahoma sunset, wonder in a tree that follows a summer storm. Natural beauty can soften a mood, change an outlook, and bring people together.

That is why the Oklahoma City Community Foundation has embraced beautification in its ongoing effort to beautify the Oklahoma City community.

Through the years, we have planted thousands of trees and flowers at hundreds of neighborhood parks, schools, and other spaces across the city. We were hoping to help make our community look nicer, but that was not all we accomplished. These trees and flowers have also nurtured and inspired the best in our community. Think of every tree and flower as a seed of hope and goodwill planted in the hearts of people living across our city.

Behind every park beautification project is a stronger neighborhood, knit together by shared efforts, shared values and relationships that go beyond living next door or down the street. Improving parks and taking care of parks can strengthen neighborhoods because parks create bonds. We believe in strong neighborhoods because they are the backbone of our community. By planting trees and flowers, we can cultivate the good in neighborhoods, creating beauty that everyone can enjoy and share.

In Oklahoma City, we are fortunate to have beautiful parks. Most of us know about the New Scissortail Park and the Myriad Gardens. The king and queen of our park system, their flowers, trees, and landscape provide thousands of office workers and downtown visitors every month, but the OCCF’s efforts focus on Rotary Park, Jasper Park, Crown Heights Park and the dozens of other parks and public spaces that make our neighborhoods special.

Most people appreciate beautification, but they don’t realize the secondary benefits. We can sometimes overlook how trees can make a playground more inviting, how the bloom of flowers can make a school feel more like home or how a shoveled and watered lawn can mark the start of a lasting relationship.

Through our Margaret Annis Boys Trust, we began sponsoring beautification projects two years ago to help neighborhoods look nicer. As it turned out, we were doing much more than that.

Nancy Anthony is president of the Oklahoma City Community Foundation, www.OCCF.org.