

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Brigaders Restore Park Benches for the City of Neenah

The Boys' & Girls' Brigade has partnered with the City of Neenah Parks and Recreation Department to restore park benches that are placed throughout the parks in the city. The idea for the project began in 2008 when the ninth grade Brigaders built and donated a picnic table to the city to be placed in a local park.

Kevin Willis, Brigade program leader, contacted Trevor Fink at the City of Neenah to ask how the sixth grade Brigaders could help the city during the 2008/2009 Brigade program year. Willis commented on the benefit of the program, "this community service project has instilled a sense of pride and ownership in these 12-year-old boys showing them they can play a vital role in the community. They have a new respect and understanding of the responsibility to the community they live in."

The Brigade began picking up park benches in October that were in need of paint and repair. Nearly 100 sixth grade Brigade boys are refurbishing the park benches and eight park benches have already been returned to the city. The goal is to completely refurbish over 40 park benches for a savings of 200 man hours to the City of Neenah. Mayor George Scherck said, "The Boys' & Girls' Brigade not only builds leaders for our future but continues to give back to the community with valuable service projects that help make Neenah a better place for all of us, both today and tomorrow."

The Brigade sixth grade boys program which is broken into small groups of 10 has over 30 adult volunteer mentors. Two of the group leaders, Steve Matthews and Gary Madsen, saw this community sharing project as a fun opportunity for the boys to work together as a team. Madsen said, "The boys saw how their efforts repainting the benches will impact the parks' appearances throughout the community. One of the boys stated that he was going to tell his parents and friends that he helped to keep the parks clean by repainting the benches. By instilling the sense of volunteering at a young age we are building future volunteers and leaders."

Brad Benning, another Brigade adult mentor said, "Overall the bench experience went over really well. We began by briefly talking about why we were doing the project and how it was helping the community by keeping the benches in good shape for people to enjoy sitting on at the parks. We also talk about the importance of not committing vandalism. The kids loved the idea of helping out the community and working as a team to clean up the benches and make them look nice. It created an opportunity for the boys to get to know each other and talk about different experiences they have had with helping out at home or with the community."

The Brigade mission is: We Build Leaders. Character development and leadership programs are offered for sixth through twelfth grade youth. Summer camp experiences are offered at Onaway Island in Waupaca, Wisconsin. Youth are served by hundreds of adult volunteer leaders. For more information on how to join or become a volunteer visit Brigade's website at www.bgbrigade.com or call (920) 725-3983.



CAPTION: Boys' & Girls' Brigade kids give back to the community by restoring city park benches.