

# Students help bring life to old mascot

By Luke Smucker

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Chatsworth, Ill.

In an effort to bring the bluebird back to the Chatsworth community, Pontiac Township High School environmental earth science students and Life Skills students worked with Prairie Central Junior High School students, the Chatsworth Citizen's Advisory Board, Livingston County Board members and local residents to place 80 bluebird houses throughout the Chatsworth community last Saturday.

The species is significant to the village because prior to Chatsworth High School consolidating Bluebird.

Pontiac Township High School science teacher and Livingston County Board member Paul Ritter said the project began with an anonymous donation of 36 bluebird houses, which inspired the Chatsworth community to come together in effort to bring more Eastern bluebirds to the area.

"This project is about the community pulling together to experience something that can be enjoyed by everyone," Richard Runyon, mayor of Chatsworth and member of the Citizen's Advisory Board said.

"The bluebird is native to our area and with it being the old high school mascot, it is near and dear to our hearts. With the diminished population of these beautiful birds, this community effort is not only a great thing to our residents, but also for the environment we love."

The event was officially called the Chatsworth Bluebird Celebration. It was held at the Chatsworth American Legion to recognize the students and teachers with approximately 150 people attending. Joe and Janet Fornerius, bluebird experts from Dwight and members of the National American Bluebird Society, shared tips with the audience like where bluebirds like to nest, how to care for the houses and how to identify the bird by its song.

Students at the Chatsworth Elementary School created wall and table decorations for the celebration and certificates of appreciation were presented for the students in recognition of their work.

"We expect more folks to jump on board and want to install their own birdhouses," Runyon said. "Our local Corner Hardware store is stocking bluebird house kits complete with the conduit and rebar to erect them.

"Already, residents from Strawn, Forrest, Piper City and Fairbury have shown an interest in coming on board with this project and we welcome everyone who wants to participate. This gives all of us in our communities something to look forward to this spring."

Reflecting on the weekend, Life Skills student Robert Betts said it was a fun way to give back to Chatsworth.

"I really enjoyed how nice the mayor was," Betts said. "It gave me a good feeling to help put up the bird houses. It's not very hard to put these houses together and I think it was a great

experience to be part of. I haven't seen a bluebird yet, but maybe I'll get to see one in the future."

For more information on the project, contact Runyon at 815-674-5497 or email [rarunyon@frontier.com](mailto:rarunyon@frontier.com).



With the stake firmly in place, Pontiac Township High School Life Skills students Dan Dwyer, left, and Robert Betts place a blue bird house on top. Around 80 similar birdhouses were placed around the community in Chatsworth.