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## Vanier Beautification hosts its first Jane's Walk



REPORTED BY Holly Gordon



Vanier Beautification Jane's Walk participants made their way to the Richelieu-Vanier Community Centre garden. **Photo by Holly Gordon.**

You voted for a Jane's Walk through Vanier when we asked you [which neighbourhood deserved a walk](#) during the city's fifth annual weekend in honour of urbanist Jane Jacobs.

Sadly, we were forced to cancel the walk. Happily, residents and fans of Vanier had already planned their own walks, all of which took place May 5 and 6. Because we couldn't bring you to a Vanier Jane's Walk, we decided to bring a walk to you—and it was a walk that shared a bit in common with our own approach. **Holly Gordon** followed along, and here's her report.

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Just before 10 a.m. on Sunday morning, members of the [Vanier Beautification](#) community group gathered on Dupuis Street for [their Jane's Walk](#). The bilingual walk didn't technically have a leader. Instead, it was set up as a sort of all-star community members' show and tell, where walkers visited key community achievements north of Montreal Road.

Vanier Beautification started with the help of [Crime Prevention Ottawa](#) in the fall of 2007, after CPO decided beautification of the neighbourhood needed to be addressed. The past five years have seen the group grow from a handful of members to a distribution list of more than 225 people, and it's involved in everything from graffiti removal to community gardens. It also organizes spring and fall Vanier-wide clean-ups, and this year's spring edition runs [Saturday, May 12](#). The group's award-winning Eyes on Vanier Walkabout—an informal, twice-weekly summer event that gathers residents to walk around the neighbourhood—sounds exactly like a Jane's Walk and will start again soon.

It's no wonder, then, that the group's first official Jane's Walk felt like a family gathering. Approximately 20 people, mostly Vanier residents, introduced themselves before the walk started, with Vanier Beautification co-chair Lucie Marleau and Vanier Community Service Centre's Elyse Robertson striking the path to Vanier Beautification's first success story: the small park on the northeast corner of Carillon and Marier.

Elvira Diaz-Granados is a Vanier guerilla gardener who has been a homeowner in the neighbourhood for the past 20 years. "I'm madly in love with [Vanier]," she says, beaming during her introduction to the group.



**Elvira Diaz-Granados speaks passionately about her guerilla gardening in Vanier.**

*Photo by Holly Gordon*



**Vanier Beautification relies on supplies and help from community members to get things done.**

*Photo by Holly Gordon.*

The park on the corner of Carillon and Marier is Diaz-Granados's gem. Many of the residents attest to the corner formerly being a problem area—littered, and a common place for prostitution. Today, the corner is clean, green and a calm place to sit and meet neighbours.

“You have to get in touch with it, you have to get to know it, but you cannot do anything else but fall in love with it,” says Diaz-Granados of her neighbourhood. “It doesn't matter what you find. None of your children are perfect. You love them.”

It was the overarching theme to this Jane's Walk: love your neighbourhood, and take ownership of it. The walk included the Eastview cenotaph, a former dumping ground for garbage before Vanier Beautification cleaned it up and had a resident monitor a garbage can for that corner. It also led its way through Optimiste Park, which recently benefitted from the organization's cleanup program.

The walk ended at another community centre, this time Richelieu-Vanier. Behind the centre is Vanier Beautification co-chair Marguerite Beaulieu's baby: a 36-box community garden, which she says is the only accessible community garden—with its elevated boxes and flat terrain. Box #26, the first on the left, is the “help yourself” box, which was Beaulieu's answer to people stealing produce from the garden. Box #36 is Partage Vanier's box, which won't be needed for long when Beaulieu and Vanier Beautification help the food bank create its own community garden.

“We have to create beauty in the middle of not so much,” says Diaz-Granados, speaking of her smaller garden but alluding to the neighbourhood. The engaged citizens of Vanier are rightly proud of their neighbourhood—transforming it from “not so much” to much more.