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MADISON MEADOW SAVED

Madison Meadow is more than big enough for a good game of tag, and has just enough trees for some good climbing. This grassy meadow, an unassuming two-acre remnant orchard tucked into the Friendly Area Neighborhood, is the last natural open space in that area, but five years ago it was for sale and at risk of being developed.

Now neighborhood residents no longer need to worry about the future of the meadow. On Oct. 30, after five years of hard work, the Madison Meadow nonprofit group raised the last dollar towards purchase of the meadow.

“We’re so happy to have this green space saved for the future for everyone,” said Susan Jerde, a longtime area resident and early organizer of the Madison Meadow group. “We’re so grateful for every single donation,” she said.

Within a few months of forming, said Jerde, the informal group had become a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation with plans to purchase the meadow. It had also launched an outreach effort with lawn signs, T-shirts, articles in local newspapers, a table at the Mt. Pisgah Wildflower Festival and donation jars at local markets.

“This was a totally grassroots effort,” said Jerde. “It started out with about 30 neighbors one rainy night meeting in someone’s living room.”

Large and small donations soon began to come in. Over the course of five years, the Oregon Community Foundation made several donations, and the Madison Meadow group received many small donations from people all over the city, Jerde said. The group also received a \$100,000 donation from an anonymous source, she said.

In a year, the group had raised \$220,000 for a down payment on the property and was given three years to raise the remaining \$250,000.

“So many people came together, realizing the value of these two acres of green. The city does need to get denser, but as that happens, we need to hang on to these green spaces. They become so much more precious,” Jerde said.

The Madison Meadow group emphasizes the importance of knowing when not to build and refers to the greening of neighborhoods as “the new smart growth.”

“The meadow is a place where there’s a chance to see a snake or a dragonfly,” said Jerde. “Ball fields and school parks are great, but those are not places where you might catch a little glimpse of wildlife,” she said.

Now that the neighborhood group is the final steward of the meadow, it plans to continue enhancement projects it started several years ago. Jerde said the group plans to enhance biodiversity and native plants but doesn’t have any plans to make the meadow an off-limits reserve. She added that group wants to preserve the



meadow's rural feeling. "Rather than planting fussy garden plants, we want to help people feel like they've stepped back in time," she said.

The group's plans for the meadow include planting native prairie grasses as well as some heritage trees: several white oaks and a big leaf maple. Last spring, the group planted a butterfly garden as part of a project to help draw more monarch butterflies to the Willamette Valley. It has also been working with local schools to plant milkweed and native grasses, and plans to continue working with schoolchildren to reintroduce the camas flower.

Jerde said that because there is so much volunteer interest in enhancing the meadow, the Madison Meadow board will be doubling in size. She added that the board plans to consult with other neighborhood groups who want to preserve open space.

For now, Jerde encouraged anyone who's interested to walk through the meadow. "It's just a couple minutes of mental peace, to see all that green and all those trees," she said. — *Jessica Hirst*