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Mother Brook cleanup project nearly complete

Ignacio Laguarda
Staff Reporter

After decades of neglect and abuse from contaminated waste, Mother Brook canal in Hyde Park has been restored to past glory.

The oldest canal in the country, Mother Brook had been contaminated with so many chemicals and toxins that the team in charge of the cleanup is still searching for clues as to what exactly had been dumped there.

"You never know what lurks under the water," said John H. Mitchell, project manager for

behind the Shaw's Supermarket on Hyde Park Avenue and next to the Blake Estates apartment complex across the street.

The multimillion-dollar cleanup project began in 2007 and was funded by the Thomas and Betts Company, which owns the site where the L.E. Mason Company used to stand on Business Street. The project involved pumping water out of the canal and digging as far as 37 feet into the ground, as the contamination had seeped into the soil and banks of the brook.

The canal was dammed up on both ends of the excavation



Mother Brook as it looks today, along the entrance to the Blake Estates apartment complex. A massive cleanup effort that began in 2007 renewed the heavily contaminated creek and extracted multiple cars and storage tanks from the water.

PHOTO BY IGNACIO LAGUARDA

Shaw Environmental Group and head of the cleanup. "I was pretty surprised the first time when we diverted [the flow of] it. We pulled out three automobiles, large-diameter storage tanks. You name it, we found it."

Mother Brook runs between the Charles River in Dedham to the Neponset River. The area of the cleanup was concentrated in the parts of the canal which run

area and all fish in that portion of the stream were removed through a process that sends an electrical shock into the water which causes the fish to float to the top where they are netted and taken away.

The fish are only stunned and not harmed in the process.

Shaw Environmental is still

Mother Brook

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Local students take part in nationally televised MLK concert



The Boston Children's Chorus, which includes five Hyde Park students and one Roslindale youth, rehearses for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Concert held on Jan. 18. The concert was televised across the country.

PHOTO BY IGNACIO LAGUARDA

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Five Hyde Park youth and one Roslindale student performed as part of the Boston Children's Chorus during a nationally televised concert honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. on Jan. 18.

The concert has been aired on live television for the past three years. This year the show was broadcast live in Boston on WCVB-TV and was syndicated in over 80 percent of the television market in the United States.

"We are celebrating the legacy of Dr. King and his life's work in trying to bring people together across differences," said David Howse, executive director of the chorus. "Our

mission is to harness the power and joy of music to bring diverse communities together and inspire social change. What better way to fulfill our mission than by honoring a man whose life work was committed to that?"

The choir has performed an annual MLK concert since its inception in 2004. At the beginning, the group was comprised of 20 students. Now, there are over 350 youth in the choir across four different levels in four separate locations.

Jaleel Johnson is one of the original members of the chorus and a Hyde Park resident. The 16-year-old's voice has changed so much since he started with the choir that now he sings as a bass.

He was excited to perform during the concert and showcase

his voice.

"I like when I see people get emotional when we're singing," he said.

Bryan Charles, another Hyde Park resident, has been in the choir for two years and remembers watching past MLK concerts on television.

"I'm going to sing in the big choir I used to watch on television," he said, only hours before the concert began. "It's a good opportunity to show people I can sing."

Elizabeth Stutts has been with the chorus almost since the beginning and is already dreading the day she'll have to leave the group and go to college.

"When I go to college, I know I'll stay in New England to come see them," she said.

YMCA seeking input from community

Ignacio Laguarda
Staff Reporter

The re-opening of the Hyde Park YMCA is still months away, but the center is already looking for suggestions from local residents about what programs to offer and what to do with many of the building's new rooms.

A complete renovation of the building, after an October fire destroyed the roof and scarred much of the structure, should be

completed in the fall. In the meantime, surveys will be distributed at community meetings across the neighborhood to get feedback and build excitement about the reopening.

"It's really just to create a buzz that after 100 years this building is going to get a huge beautiful renovation," said Ann Glora, Health and Wellness Director of the Hyde Park YMCA.

The survey includes questions about which programs and services should be offered at the

center. Some possibilities include Health and Wellness activities, swimming lessons, senior activities, Saturday sports classes and family activities.

The renovated center will include a new six-lane, 25-yard swimming pool, full gymnasium, dance studio, weight room, steam room, sauna, as well as a spinning room full of stationary bicycles.

Glora wants to hear suggestions from the community about what to do with so many rooms.

"What would the community like to see us do in those rooms?" she asked. "What kind of sports would they like to see for kids? What ages would they like us to target?"

One change that has already been incorporated into the design is that the center will be completely handicap-accessible. "It opens it up to a lot more people in our community," said Glora. "The stairs were daunting to a lot of age groups."

Glora said the center has to

order completely new equipment as nothing was left over after the fire. The new YMCA will have approximately 30 pieces of cardiovascular equipment and a strength-training line of 15 to 18 pieces.

Those who would like a copy of the survey can call the YMCA at 617-361-2300 or e-mail the center at aglora@ymcaboston.org.

A YMCA Reach-Out Campaign

YMCA

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