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For Immediate Release

Grand Opening of Whitnall Park Rotary Circle

Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony for Accessible Pathway in Boerner Botanical Gardens

Hales Corners, WI (June 25, 2015) — A ribbon-cutting ceremony will open the Whitnall Park Rotary Circle, the new, accessible pathway and terrace in Boerner Botanical Gardens, Tuesday, July 28 at noon. The Botanical Gardens, “Milwaukee County’s Living Museum,” is located at 9400 Boerner Drive in Whitnall Park.

Connecting the Herb Garden and Bog Walk, the new pathway follows the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary two days prior to the ribbon cutting. The pathway offers equal and independent access for people with temporary or long-term disabilities.

Milwaukee County Parks, Whitnall Park Rotary Club, Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens, the Reiman Foundation, Holtz Foundation, and Breckenridge Landscape were partners in bringing the vision to fruition.

“We continue to work hard to maintain and improve upon the jewel that is our Milwaukee County Park System.” County Executive Chris Abele said. “When we can do it together with strong community partners, it’s even better. We’re excited to use universal design to build projects that improve our parks and our community for *all* residents.”

Prior to the project, accessing the Bog Walk meant visitors had to navigate a stone staircase from the Herb Garden or follow the somewhat steep Daylily Walk. Anyone in a wheelchair would have to use the Daylily Walk and retrace their path when coming to the end of the Bog Walk bridge.

“We are thrilled with the completion of this project,” said Jack Williams, Rotarian and Paul Harris Fellow recognized for his work on the Rotary Circle project. “Through our mission of ‘Service Above Self,’ we were especially focused on providing entry to previously inaccessible garden areas to people with mobility disabilities. It is appropriate that we dedicate this beautiful pathway during the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.”

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With the new design, everyone can loop through the Bog Walk, along the Rock Garden, and follow a more gently sloped path to the Rain Garden.

“The Bog Walk is such a serene and beautiful place,” said Parks Director John Dargle, Jr. “*Everyone* should have the opportunity to experience this. When you’re on the bridge above the moisture-rich garden, you ask yourself ‘how could something so lush be so close to the city?’ This really is a remarkable place. And we are so pleased with the added value and benefit that the Rotary Circle project brings to our acclaimed gardens and park system.”

Also more accessible will be the newly refreshed evergreen collection, with additional juniper and dwarf conifers. In the past, few visitors would cross the grass to get closer views of these specimens.

While the pathway provides first-time access for some people with mobility challenges, the universal design makes access easier for all people.

“That’s the beauty of universal design,” said Tim Ochnikowski, Director of the Office for Persons with Disabilities. “We consider the diversity of human abilities and in so doing, create something that is more user-friendly for everyone. From kids in strollers and scampering toddlers to weekend warriors with athletic injuries and our elders with walkers, everyone will benefit.”

The project’s circle or terrace will function as a rest area or gathering area. Aligned on the popular sculpture, “Mother and Two Sons” by George Adam Dietrich, the terrace offers a vista of the surrounding gardens and arboretum. In the future, the terrace will be added to the selection of wedding and photography sites available at the Botanical Gardens.

In addition to providing connections to previously inaccessible garden collections, the project also showcases best practices in stormwater management. The pathway is constructed of permeable pavers, and the natural limestone terrace is also permeable. In 2012, the Botanical Gardens received the Rain Bird Intelligent Use of Water Award for its rain-harvesting system, and the Rotary project expands these sustainability efforts.

Engraved pavers, terrace stones, and terrace benches are available for sponsorship to honor individuals, families or organizations. These sponsorships as well as donations for ongoing maintenance are accepted by the Whitnall Park Rotary Foundation.

For more information on the project, visit <http://whitnallparkrotary.org/sitepage/boerner-rotary-path-circle-project/support-the-2013-rotary-circle-community-project/>

Admission to the Botanical Gardens is \$5.50 for adults age 18 and up; \$4.50 for students of any age with IDs, Milwaukee County seniors age 60 and up with IDs, and people with disabilities; and \$3.50 for youths age 6-17. Admission to the gardens requires wearing the official daily wristband.

ADA accommodation requests should be filed with the Milwaukee County Office for Persons with Disabilities, 278-3932 (voice) or 711 (TRS).

For more information on the Botanical Gardens, call (414) 525-5601.

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