

INSIDE AURORA: Bench Guy

By Scott Johnston

So, how many people want to spend a hard earned day off grubbing around Aurora picking up other people's trash?

Based on the continued success of our annual Clean-Up Days, obviously quite a few.

And we should all be thankful they do.

Whether it's through the carelessness of ignorant folks tossing packaging on the ground, wind blowing things around, or a thousand other ways that stuff that should be in the garbage ends where it shouldn't, our green spaces accumulate a lot of litter, especially over the winter.

Hundreds of bags of it is picked up from our parks and river valleys in just a few hours in late April each year by dedicated volunteers.

And just how dedicated are they?

I was walking in a park that week-end, and noticed someone dragging a bench.

My first impression was that he was moving a park bench to be closer to his kids on the playground.

Then I realized it was not one of our typical park benches, which are secured firmly to the ground. This was one of the more ornate wood and iron ones that had obviously been in someone's backyard at some point.

Getting closer I noticed that it was in pretty bad shape, with a broken back and slats.

On top of it were three full garbage bags that he had obviously recently filled, and something else that looked like an old blanket or piece of carpet.

Before I could offer to help (impeccable timing on my part, because it was all clearly massively heavy), he had dragged it to the edge of the road for pickup.

I offered him a small verbal well done and carried on down the trail, where I quickly ran into the drag marks, where he had lugged the bench up from a nearby forest.

I continued along the path, noting the steep incline up which he had hauled the bench and its load. After a few hundred meters I was deep in the woods, and the drag marks mysteriously stopped.

I wandered that trail occasionally and had never seen such a bench along it, so can only assume it had come from deeper in the forest.

In this case he either had someone assist in lifting it at least to the path, who had then left him to deal with it on his own, which seemed unlikely. Or, he had carried it himself out of the woods, which also seem improbable, given the obvious weight of the thing. However, it had made its way to the trail, this man, likely by himself, had picked up three bags of garbage, and single-handedly hauled it, and a carpet, and a bench, hundreds of metres uphill, and through a park.

For all I know that was just one of many benches, picnic tables or other extraordinarily heavy things he had manhandled out to the curb that morning.

This was not for physical reward, although he may have gotten a burger at the subsequent event barbeque. More likely, he was just someone who wanted to do his bit to beautify Aurora.

Now, it's safe to say that not everyone who participated in Clean-Up Day managed to acquire such an impressive haul of refuse. But multiply even a portion of his effort and enthusiasm by all of the volunteers that Saturday, and the result is pretty impressive.

So on behalf of all of us, thanks ?bench guy?, and everyone else in Town who pitched in.

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