

SONDRA'S GARDEN OF HOPE

As I've ridden my bicycle on the Roosevelt Trail over the years, I've often admired the array of flowers during the different seasons - lilacs, poppies, iris and coral bells in spring; daisies, daylilies and coneflowers in summer; sedum, mums and thistle in autumn - in the small garden at the corner of Roosevelt Road and 22nd Street South, affectionately named "Sondra's Garden of Hope."

Along with admiring the garden, I also wondered how the garden came to be and was referred to Ann Dietman for information about the history and purpose of the garden.

Ann related that after 22nd Street South was widened, the area where the garden now stands became an eyesore. Trees had been removed; sand dumped, and cars parked there. In 1997 Ann and several others approached the city about planting a garden at that spot. Initially the City was reluctant because there was no water source, but later agreed and supplied compost and wood chips and still does to this day. It is officially a city garden.

A year later in 1998, a sixteen-year-old in the neighborhood, Sondra Blumke, was diagnosed with an aggressive form of leukemia and spent five months in ICU at Children's Hospital. The neighbors wanted to do something to give her hope and received permission from the City to name the garden "Sondra's Garden of Hope."

Ann still tends the garden with the help of others. Sondra, who became a nurse and is now married, helps when she visits St Cloud. The garden stands today as a symbol of hope to all who are facing challenges and is meant to be a blessing to everyone who passes it.

-- Sue Nielson