



Mary Silva listens as the land she once owned at 128 Auburn St. is dedicated as a new family park. (Express Photo/Eric Baxter)

'Troubles' and 'Bozo' would feel right at home

Burned family homesite is city's newest park

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Mary Silva said her mother, Maria, would have loved the changes to the family's former land at 128 Auburn St.

"She would have loved the grass," Silva said. "We never could grow grass, but she loved growing things."

It was this sentiment, carried through a generation, that was the seed for the creation of the Auburn Street Family Park, which was dedicated yesterday afternoon.

The project was a partnership between Troop 91 Boy Scout Alex Beecy, a Central High School senior, and NeighborWorks Greater Manchester, formerly Manchester Neighborhood Housing Services.

The space was formerly the land for Silva's family home, which burned in 2003. After the home was razed, the small lot became a dumping ground for trash and litter, and was used as a shortcut for neighborhood residents between Auburn and Chestnut streets.

When Silva began looking for a buyer for the land, she said she wanted to find someone who wouldn't turn it "into a parking lot."

"My mother never wanted that," Silva said.

After rejecting a few of-

fers, she was approached by NeighborWorks, which proposed the idea of revitalizing the space. Beecy then stepped into the picture as an Eagle Scout candidate looking for a project.

"I wanted to make this the best backyard in the city," Beecy said during the

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dedication.

On Sept. 30 he and more than 30 volunteers raked, shoveled, and planted more than 40 trees and shrubs to create the backyard, and finished it in just about eight hours. The result was an oasis for city people, and the residents at the Renaissance IV affordable housing units next to the park.

The park is also one of three in the city finished with help from the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension as part of a long-term urban renewal effort.

And rising above it all is a Norway maple that Silva's mother planted in 1941. It was also the only growing thing that survived the ravages of the family dogs, Troubles and Bozo.

"She always wanted grass," Silva said. "I think she would love this park."