

## Karth Lake clean-up continues with the help of Arden Hills Foundation and others

by Emma Theis

The clean-up continues for Karth Lake, says lakeshore homeowner and lake improvement board member Gary Gerding, but with the help of several Karth Lake property owners, the Arden Hills Foundation, and others, the Karth Lake Improvement District Board has been making a significant difference in the lake's water quality, aesthetics and overall ecosystem health.

"We just have to keep at it," said Gerding, "because all the forces that are trying to change (the lake for the worse) are keeping at it as well...The good news is that (Karth Lake) is a great habitat, the bad news is that if you don't take care of it, it will eventually become a swampland."

With the ever-increasing development of homes, businesses, roads, and parking lots around the lake, the shore's permeability has decreased causing large amounts of nutrient and toxic-filled runoff to enter the lake and stay put.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, this runoff is harmful to the aquatic habitat because the excess nutrients spur weed growth and algae blooms. When algae and weeds die, the decomposition process removes oxygen from the water. Fish and other aquatic organisms can't exist in water with low dissolved oxygen levels.

The runoff also causes Karth Lake's water level to rise. One inch of rain equals two inches of rise in the lake. Trees along the shore cannot survive their roots being submerged and end up falling into the water. Debris and sediment are major issues that impact the lake's water quality and aesthetic factor.

Last fall, the improvement board got approval from the City and the DNR to remove weeds and debris from the around Karth Lake's shore. In August, Holtz Landscaping removed approximately 20 cubic yards of weeds from shoreline property. They returned in October and removed around 40 cubic yards of wood debris from the water. According to Gerding, some logs were over 20 feet long and others were over two feet in diameter.

"Karth Lake has the same challenges to its water quality as all urban lakes do, and we are making measurable progress towards improved water quality...more progress than most Twin City lakes."

--Board member Gary Gerding

Hiring out the projects to Holtz Landscaping totalled around \$3,000 and was funded solely by Karth Lake homeowners. The Arden Hills Foundation worked with the project participants to make their donations to the

clean-up tax deductible.

Established in October 2012, the Arden Hills Foundation exists as a legally separate entity from the City of Arden Hills and partners with people who want to fundraise for a project that will benefit the

people who live, work or play in the City.

The foundation makes it possible for Arden Hills citizens to establish or contribute to a community project with the benefit of a charitable tax deduction without going through the hassle of becoming a legal charity on their own.

"Our goal is to support the people doing the projects," said Arden Hills Foundation Secretary Arlene Mitchell, "We hope to become more of a resource not just for moving money but helping people move their projects forward."

This spring, Gerding says he hopes to work with the Arden Hills Foundation again to fundraise for another 500 large mouth bass fingerlings to be added to Karth Lake in an attempt to drive down the algae population even more. Nine hundred fingerlings were added to the lake in 2010 and another 500 were added in 2013, not for sport fishing but more equalization of the ecosystem.

"People don't realize that lakes are another piece of our environment that isn't invincible," said Gerding, "We have to do something to reverse the damage and clean it up."

*This view of Karth Lake is evidence of the progress being made in the clean-up project.*

*Photos below show some of the work required to make that progress.*

