

# \$20K grant will build greenhouse classroom for Southmoreland



By [Paul Paterra](#)  
Friday, June 5, 2015, 1:36 a.m.  
*Updated 44 minutes ago*

Southmoreland School District will receive a **\$20,000 grant**, which will be used in the construction of a greenhouse on the high school campus.

The grant comes from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit's Center for Creativity, which provided \$20,000 STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Math) grants to schools in Allegheny, Fayette, Greene, Washington, Beaver, Butler, Mercer, Lawrence and Westmoreland counties. This Southmoreland project was one of 28 chosen from 90 proposals that were submitted.

Grants are funded by the Claude Worthington Benedum and Grable Foundations, as well as Chevron.

John Puskar, the district's technology coordinator, described at Thursday's school board meeting the project — titled "Learn as We Grow" — that will result from the grant.

"The money will be used to purchase a greenhouse and some of the accoutrements that go with it," he said.

Puskar said the greenhouse classroom will engage students through interaction with their environment and technology.

"Students will have the **opportunity to address global environmental concerns** and realize the connection that science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics have in a real-world setting by applying them to a growing career field," he said.

Many facets of science will be able to be applied, such as biology classes investigating plant light or chemistry students **assessing soil and water quality** of resources used in the greenhouse.

Some of the other ways the components of STEAM will be applied include:

- Technology classes will design the aquaculture and hydroponic systems;
- Engineering students will be involved in the design of the greenhouse systems;
- Art students will create logos and literature to promote the project;
- Math classes will involve analyzing data through various logging activities.

"I think this provides us with a lot of opportunities," Puskar said.

Also, the board is expected to award a bid for the complete replacement of the high school gymnasium floor at its June 11 meeting.

Athletic director Charlie Swink said the current floor has been in place for at least 15 years.

Mark Scheller of Eckels Group told the board the bids were submitted by companies knowing the work had to be completed by Aug. 17.

*Paul Paterra is a staff editor for Trib Total Media. He can be reached at 724-887-6101 or [ppaterra@tribweb.com](mailto:ppaterra@tribweb.com).*

Read more: <http://triblive.com/news/westmoreland/8479214-74/greenhouse-students-technology#ixzz3cDRwiduz>

Follow us: [@triblive on Twitter](#) | [triblive on Facebook](#)

# Derry wrings rainwater from parking lot near community pool

Sean Stipp | Trib Total Media

Westmoreland Conservation District recently finished a permeable parking lot near Derry Community Pool. A "island" in the middle of the lot has been installed with trees that are supposed to act as a rain garden and collect rainwater that lands on the parking lot rather than letting it run off.



By Greg Reinbold

Tuesday, June 2, 2015, 6:04 p.m.

Visitors to Derry Community Pool and the neighboring Little League baseball fields will notice a new parking lot in place of the dilapidated tennis courts that had marked the end of East Third Street.

Instead of the paved tennis courts turning the grassy area surrounding them into a muddy mess after rainstorms, **the parking area was constructed to prevent rainwater runoff.**

"It's an excellent project. If anybody has not been down there, it's a place to see," Derry Borough Council Vice President Al Checca said of the new parking lot. "It's fantastic. It's night-and-day compared to the mudhole it once was. It's a beautiful addition; it really is."

Westmoreland Conservation District used about **\$150,000** in grant funds from the state Department of Community and Economic Development's Watershed Restoration and Protection Program to construct the water-permeable parking lot.

**"When it rains around here, over the course of a year we get almost 4 feet of rain,"** said Westmoreland Conservation District hydraulic engineer Jim Pillsbury. "We get about 40 to 45 inches of rain a year.

"If you have a paved surface like a parking lot, 100 percent of that water that hits that surface runs off. When it runs off, it might go into the street and flood the street, it might go into somebody's basement, it might overload a stream or carry pollutants into a stream."

In the case of the parking lot site, runoff from the tennis courts would end up in McGee Run.

The permeable parking lot, designed with a paver brick called TurfStone, will allow that rain to pass through to the ground where it falls rather than redirecting it where it could cause problems.

"Those concrete paving blocks support the weight of vehicles so that vehicles don't sink into the ground, but they allow water to pass through because they have holes in them like lattice and the water passes through to the ground," Pillsbury said. "When we get that 45 inches of rain a year on our parking lot, we're able to **park 30 cars without generating even one gallon of new runoff,** because all that water goes down into the ground."

Derry Borough Council in October selected one of the three site plans prepared by the conservation district, opting for the one that featured 26 parking spaces and "islands" planted with shade trees and groundcover to absorb rainwater.

The borough was required to provide \$10,000 in matching funds for the grant, and did so via in-kind services to prepare the site.

"We had to put a wee little portion towards it. It was in labor or dollars, and we met the obligation in labor by far," Checca said. "The benefit was far outweighing the small investment we had to put forth."

The borough hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony May 21 to showcase the new parking lot, welcoming local and state representatives to the site for a demonstration of the pavers' permeability.

*Greg Reinbold is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. He can be reached at 724-459-6100, ext. 2913, or [greinbold@tribweb.com](mailto:greinbold@tribweb.com).*

Read more: <http://triblive.com/neighborhoods/yourlatrobe/yourlatrobemore/8422109-74/lot-parking-derry#ixzz3cDU769ON>

Follow us: [@triblive on Twitter](#) | [triblive on Facebook](#)

# Greensburg, conservationists team to ease floods, erosion

Sean Stipp | Trib Total Media

Larry Myers walks along the stream bank of Jacks Run at Lynch Field in Greensburg on May 29, 2015. In the foreground is one of five interpretive trail signs designed to educate people about the improvements that have been made to prevent flooding. The Sewickley Creek Watershed Association has planted dozens of trees and shrubs along Jacks Run to help prevent flooding of the baseball and soccer fields at Lynch Field.

By Matt Faye  
Sunday, May 31, 2015, 12:01 a.m.

Greensburg officials teamed up with a conservation group to complete a **three-year project to address flooding and erosion near Jacks Run** at Lynch Field in the city.

**Lynch Field lies in a natural flood plain for Jacks Run and its tributaries, frequently flooding during times of heavy precipitation and rendering the baseball and soccer fields unusable.**

While the latest improvements to the stream bank won't completely prevent flooding, the repairs will mend damage from previous floods and help prevent further erosion.

The **project between Sewickley Creek Watershed Association and the city of Greensburg was finalized earlier this year** with the construction of an education kiosk and multiple interpretive signs. The kiosk, located directly below Veteran's Memorial Swimming Pool, was designed and assembled by students from the Central Westmoreland Career and Technology Center.

Carpentry instructor Gary Kistler said his students were happy to help.

"The project was a practical learning experience that our students will be able to showcase to their family and friends for decades to come," he said. "The students enjoyed putting their engineering and carpentry skills to work on a real community project."

Boy Scout Troop 465 helped the project last month by **planting more than 75 trees and numerous shrubs to help stabilize the creek banks. The troop has assisted Sewickley Creek with similar efforts since 1995.**

Both the kiosk and interpretive signs are intended to educate visitors on the engineering techniques used throughout the project and to encourage visitors to use similar practices in their own back yards.

According to Larry Myers of the watershed group, the kiosk and signs were funded through three grants from Firestone Building Products totaling **\$8,200**. Previous repairs during the project had been funded through partnerships with West Penn Power, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the Westmoreland Conservation District.

**Initial improvements were made to the banks in 1996 with the installation of a jack dam formed of rocks in the stream.** Deflectors and geoweb panels were placed in the bank as well. The deflectors help redirect water flow while the geoweb panels, used to **stabilize soil, allow plants to grow naturally along the bank.**

The latest phase of the project began in 2012, including the placement of river rock and shrubs along the edge of the banks to help prevent erosion.

Westmoreland County Commissioner Ted Kopas acknowledged the impact of all parties involved during the Earth Day dedication of the project.

**"It is through partnerships like this project that we can make the biggest difference in our communities,"** said Kopas. **"Each group brings a piece of the puzzle to the table."**

*Matt Faye is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. He can be reached at 724-836-6220 or [mfaye@tribweb.com](mailto:mfaye@tribweb.com).*

Read more: <http://triblive.com/news/westmoreland/8442927-74/project-bank-erosion#ixzz3cDUYnzfQ>

Follow us: [@triblive on Twitter](#) | [triblive on Facebook](#)