

Tableau: 'We Are Making History Now'

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The Lakewood resident modestly explained that his duties with the committee involve chairing its meetings, taking notes and serving as facilitator, along with helping identify its resources in undertaking a community project.

Shepherd, while acknowledging he came up with the idea, said the committee defined the design and raised the money.

The result, to be executed by Poulin, will be a tableau of three life-size figures — those of Catherine D. Harris, who operated an Underground Railroad depot at her 12 W. Seventh St. home; Silas Shearman, operator of a harness and saddle shop at his home on the east side of Pine street between Third and Fourth streets; and a slave they are aiding.

The two were instrumental in sheltering and otherwise caring for slaves, up to 17 at one time, many of them en route to Canada.

The brief program at Dow Park was presided over by Diane Peterson, a member of the Jamestown Underground Railroad Steering Committee that has been active for about 1 1/2 years. She is also on the planning committee for the Juneteenth Group.

Serving with her are Inez Alston; Bobby "Andrew" Hickey; Pat Dickey; Florence Hinson;

George Lawn; Paul Leone; Shepherd; Dr. Georgiana Stewart; Lulu Taylor; Vivian Taylor; B. Dolores Thompson, city historian; Isabelle Jackson, honorary chairman; Russell E. Diethrick Jr., treasurer; and Vickye James, city youth director.

Ms. Peterson asked the about 30 people attending to stand in the area and think back to 1850 when the present park was a cemetery and part of the neighborhood was known as Little Africa, with Mrs. Harris' house still standing on Seventh Street, marked by a placard.

"The two of them (Mrs. Harris and Shearman) made history here in Jamestown," she said. As for the planned tableau, "It's going to be an awesome sight."

"A community that fails to recognize its past has no future," said Mayor Sam Teresi, noting that the project is important because "it tells us who we are and where we came from."

Paul Leone, Shepherd and Ms. Alston were cited by the mayor as among those contributing to the final design of the tableau that was shown as an artist's sketch.

"This dream is going to become a reality by people working together," Teresi said, noting that several others made input to find an appropriate site for the project in which the city,

philanthropic organizations and businesses are working together for a common goal.

Poulin said he was approached about 2 1/2 years ago and now has a vision of his objective.

"These sculptures are going to be here for hundreds of years," he said. "We are making history now. It's only going to make Jamestown better."

He invited people to visit his First Street studio and "put clay on the sculpture."

Ms. James said there is a strong desire among the city's youth to know about Jamestown's history — who they are, where they're-at and how they got here.

Carla Howie of the community involvement team at Cummins Inc. presented a \$1,000 check to Randy Sweeney, executive director of Chautauqua Region Community Foundation, on behalf of the unit.

"The energy has all been from the community, as was that of the Underground Railroad," said Shepherd. He said it is a marvel of the perseverance of the abolitionist group in the country.

Leone, Mrs. Thompson and others were reported as compiling historical information dealing with the subject.

Shepherd said about \$13,000 of the estimated \$75,000 to \$93,000 total cost of the project has been realized to date, along with another \$2,000 in pledges.