

## Volunteers plant beauty in Cape Coral roadway

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Heather Beigh rolled out of bed about three hours earlier than she prefers to most Saturdays.

The North Fort Myers 18-year-old joined about 50 volunteers to plant almost 500 wildflowers to beautify two medians near Bayshore and Slater roads in North Fort Myers.



By 9:45 a.m., and when she'd typically be sleeping, the project that replaced crispy grass with flowering plants was complete.

Beigh was glad she woke up early.

"I can know I helped to make something nice," Beigh said. "I can say, 'Look that's what I did.'"

Beigh was one of about 20 volunteers from the 4-H club in North Fort Myers, which calls itself 4 Feet, Fur and

Feathers.

The idea for the first-of-its-kind collaboration for the groups germinated with a North Fort Myers activist who reached out to Lee County Electric Cooperative, seeking help to add color to Bayshore Road.



LCEC approached Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization for its expertise in the planting process. Combined, the organizations provided about 30 volunteers Saturday.

The Florida Wildflower Foundation and Florida Native Plant Society provided grants totaling \$1,000 to the Lee County Department of Transportation for native plants that included beach sunflowers and tropical sage, among others.

Flowers are expected to bloom in three weeks.

"We're hoping that people will see and hear about this project and maybe think, 'We can do this in our area,'" said Karen Ryan, an LCEC manager.

There's an array of benefits for areas that have been beautified including a bump up in property values and community pride, and a drop in vandalism, said Miranda Moore, a LCEC intern who coordinated the project.

Maverick Feliciano, a 19-year-old North Fort Myers resident, happily got his hands dirty spreading mulch around the plants.

"You're just setting an example that you can make a difference," he said.

To learn more about North Fort Myers-based ECHO and its mission to equip people with resources and skills to reduce hunger and improve lives, visit [echonet.org](http://echonet.org).

To learn about youth development through 4-H, visit [4-h.org](http://4-h.org).

Information about the Coccoloba chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society can be found at [fnpscoccoloba.org](http://fnpscoccoloba.org).

The Florida Wildflower Foundation can be found at [www.flawildflowers.org](http://www.flawildflowers.org).