

Dunlap StoryWalk Receives Facelift Following Spring Hailstorm

A popular literacy attraction at Pleasant View Park is looking like new again after repairs were completed following the April hailstorms that damaged portions of the Dunlap StoryWalk.

The severe weather cracked and damaged plexiglass panels on several of the StoryWalk kiosks located along the park trail on the east side of town. The damaged panels were recently replaced, restoring the display and protecting future stories from the elements.

A StoryWalk combines reading and physical activity by displaying the pages of a children's book one page at a time along a walking route. As families move from kiosk to kiosk, they read the story in sequence while enjoying the outdoors.

The Dunlap StoryWalk was established through the efforts of Ashley Schaben, who led fundraising efforts for the project and helped coordinate its installation. Years later, she continues to oversee maintenance of the attraction, regularly updating the featured stories and caring for the kiosks.

"The StoryWalk combines so many great things for the kids and families in our community: literacy, movement and outdoor time together away from screens," Schaben said. "My hope is that families come to the park, walk the trail, read a story page by page, and then stay to enjoy the playground and the scenery. It turns reading into an experience rather than just another task."

While the hailstorm damaged many of the plexiglass panels, Schaben said the structures themselves proved remarkably durable.

"Regarding the recent hailstorm, I was pleasantly surprised by how well the kiosks held up," she said. "The metal structures suffered no damage at all. Unfortunately, many of the plexiglass panels did sustain damage and had to be reordered to fit. They were replaced during the installation of the most recent story."

The StoryWalk has become a favorite destination for families visiting Pleasant View Park, offering a free activity that encourages reading, exercise and quality family time. New stories are installed periodically throughout the year, giving visitors a reason to return and experience something different.

Keeping the attraction in top condition requires a significant amount of work behind the scenes.

"Maintaining the StoryWalk is a true team effort," Schaben said. "It requires ongoing care throughout the year, from pulling weeds around the structures and cleaning the plexiglass to replacing damaged panels and swapping out the featured books. A lot of behind-the-scenes work goes into every single story."

Preparing each book for display is a detailed process that involves purchasing two copies of the book, disassembling them, laminating and trimming the pages, and mounting them between sheets of plexiglass.

"Our wonderful librarians do a great job helping select the books and prepping the pages," Schaben said. "When it's time for the physical swap, my family is always ready to step in to help remove the plexiglass, give it a good scrub, and install the fresh stories for the community to enjoy."

Thanks to those efforts, the StoryWalk continues to provide a unique reading experience for visitors of all ages while serving as another amenity that enhances Pleasant View Park.

With repairs complete and a new story in place, families can once again enjoy a stroll through the park while following along with a book one page at a time.

