

Town abuzz after getting state's first Bee City nod

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CARLINVILLE — A nationwide effort to help bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other pollinators has named Carlinville as the first Bee City in Illinois.

In September, Carlinville officials unanimously voted to join about 170 communities and college campuses in the Bee City USA effort. The council's action followed months of work by the Make Carlinville Beautiful group to accomplish the certification.

Bee City USA is an initiative of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, a nonprofit organization based

in Portland, Oregon, seeking to galvanize communities to sustain pollinators by providing them with healthy habitat rich in a variety of native plants and free from insecticides. Pollinators — such as bumblebees, sweat bees, mason bees, honeybees, butterflies, moths, beetles, flies and hummingbirds — are responsible for the reproduction of almost ninety percent of the world's flowering plant species and one in every three bites of food we consume.

Carlinville Alderman Bill Link made a presentation on the program before the council vote. "Let it be known that we understand the importance of sustaining pollinators, and we want to make the city more pollinator friendly," said Mayor Deanna Demuzio. "We are grateful to 'Make Carlinville Beautiful' and Blackburn College, a Bee Campus, for bringing the opportunity to our attention."

Kathy Ruiter, chair of Blackburn College's Bee Campus USA Committee, said the school was thrilled that the city shares its Bee City USA efforts. Link and Mary Tinder, co-chairs of the Bee City USA-Carlinville committee, said numerous organizations and individuals participated in discussions about seeking the designation, including the Macoupin County Master Gardeners and Tree City USA-Carlinville.

Carlinville school Superintendent Becky Schuchman said the district plans to add more pollinators to each campus.

"The program aspires to make people more PC-pollinator conscious, that is," said Scott Hoffman Black, Xerces' executive director. "If lots of individuals and communities begin planting native, pesticide-free flowering trees, shrubs and perennials, it will create large-scale change for many, many species of pollinators."

Each Bee City USA city determines how they celebrate pollinators. To maintain the certification, an affiliate is expected to celebrate being a Bee City USA community every year through public awareness activities, a standing committee, signage, web links and an annual report on habitat enhancement activities.

