

Transformed

Landscaped Alumni Center grounds provide peaceful setting

THREE YEARS AGO, A CORNER OF THE Alumni Center grounds was overgrown with bushes, vines and weeds. Today, it has been transformed into a tranquil place with a walking path, gazebo, lighted fountain and memorial.

A \$100,000 grant from the Louisiana Governor's 2004 Recreational Trails Program was the catalyst for the project.

"The grant provided an opportunity for us to beautify the area," said Dan Hare, executive director of the UL Lafayette Alumni Association. A second grant, also totaling \$100,000, was awarded in 2007 to enhance and complete the project.

This portion of the Alumni Center grounds is at the intersection of St. Mary Boulevard and Girard Park Drive, which is considered a gateway to campus. It's near the Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum and UL Lafayette Foundation office.

A walkway of brick pavers was laid that enables pedestrians to stroll in shade around a natural pond. A brick gazebo incorporates the main campus' signature arches. Underground electrical lines were installed to provide power for the gazebo and a lighted fountain in the pond.

The trail is the primary attraction, but Hare said the additional enhancements made the area versatile.

Near the gazebo, a memorial commemorates lives lost on Sept. 11, 2001. On that day, terrorists hijacked three jetliners and crashed them into the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and an empty field in Pennsylvania.

Robert Hymel, a 1969 USL graduate and decorated Vietnam War veteran, was killed at the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001, as he worked as a civilian.

The late Lester J. Guidry, commander of Stanley Martin-Felix Ducrest American Legion Post 69 at the time, obtained a limestone shard from the Pentagon wreckage. He donated it to UL Lafayette to honor Hymel and others killed that day in the terrorist assault. The late Dr. Robert Fontenot, also of American Legion Post 69, pursued the project after Guidry's death.

The development of the trailway provided an appropriate setting for the tribute, Hare said. ■



TERRI FENSEL



TERRI FENSEL



TERRI FENSEL

Top: A brick gazebo will have multiple uses. Left: A student wends her way around the grounds on a path that incorporates a small footbridge. Above: A memorial honors Americans killed in terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.