

SustainableLife



Congregation dedicates new permeable parking lot

BY ROB CULLIVAN ✉

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AUBRIE AURAND / THE OUTLOOK

Eastrose Unitarian Universalist Church's Rev. Sue Matranga-Watson reads a passage to the Eastrose congregation Sunday during the dedication Sunday, Sept. 30, for its new environmentally friendly parking lot. The permeable surface that allows water to flow through the ground will help slow run-off and reduce pollution.

“Environmentally friendly” and “parking lot” are words you don’t often see in the same sentence. But Eastrose Fellowship Unitarian Universalist Church, 1133 N.E. 181st Ave., has recently dedicated a parking lot designed to be just that.

On Sunday, Sept. 30, following its regular 10 a.m. service, the church dedicated the new parking lot, which was made using an asphalt process that creates a permeable surface, allowing water to flow through the lot’s surface to the ground, rather than over the surface.

Jude Watson, who supervised the project for Eastrose, says the new parking lot reduces runoff because the ground beneath it absorbs water.

“It keeps the water on site, out of the storm drains and out of the Willamette River,” she says.

Rick Plummer, project manager for Parker Northwest Paving of Oregon City, the general contractor for the church parking lot projects, says the asphalt used in a pervious parking lot doesn’t contain the sand or fine materials found in regular asphalt.

“Anything you’ll pour through it will drain through it,” he says, adding that such asphalt has to be specially made and is somewhat more expensive than traditional asphalt.

The church started to discuss creating an environmentally friendly parking lot about five years ago, Watson says, and members raised about \$200,000 for the new lot as well as new landscaping.

The 1-acre, 49-car lot and landscaped areas also are safer than the church’s old lot, she says, because the green areas about the rear entrance of the church itself. Children, who used to have to cross the lot to play on the grass, now simply leave the rear of the church and can run on the lawn next to it. The old gravel lot was bumpy, she says, making it difficult for elderly people to navigate at times.

The new parking lot is part of the church's overall effort to become a "green sanctuary," Watson says, noting that the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations has a program that recognizes churches for becoming environmentally friendly. More information on the program can be found at www.uuministryforearth.org.

In addition to creating a green parking lot, Watson says, Eastrose doesn't use chemical pesticides or weed killers in its landscaped areas, and about a dozen congregants routinely volunteer to do weeding.

"The weeding is becoming kind of a community building," she says.

The new lot has created one welcome problem, she says – hungry strawberry plants. Rooted around a tree near the front entrance of the parking lot, the plants keep growing toward the lot because of the water that's now beneath it.

"We're trying to remind them not to root out there," she says, with a smile.

She adds that the new lot must be vacuumed, not swept, to keep its permeable surface from becoming clogged.

The new lot may be more expensive than traditional lots, she says, but the church values the "web of life" and believes it must play its part in revering it.

"Putting our faith in action is a valued piece of who we are and how we walk in the world," she says.

Reader comments

Re: Congregation dedicates new permeable parking lot

Eastrose is a great Unitarian church that practices what they preach! It's so great to have them out in East County! It's wonderful that they are working on environmentally sound solutions and really walking the talk! :) That's a true church!

"Friend of Eastrose"

(Not verified)

Wed, Oct 10, 2007 at 09:08 PM