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A new use for an old roof:
Repurposed rocks land at Brookside Care Center

As Kenosha County makes efforts to promote sustainability, parts of the old roof at one Kenosha County building have found a new home and a new purpose at a different location.

Stones that now surround the outside of much of the Brookside Care Center facility are recycled ballast material from the roof that was replaced last year at the Kenosha County Center.

In their former life, the small rocks anchored down the roof membrane of the County Center at the corner of highways 45 and 50 in Bristol – the home of the county's Department of Public Works and Development Services, the Kenosha County University of Wisconsin-Extension and satellite offices of other departments.

In their repurposed state, the stones provide an 18-inch border around the foundation of Brookside, the county-owned skilled nursing facility at 3506 Washington Road in Kenosha. The border of stones, as opposed to mulch, is designed to keep insects and rodents away from the building, explained Mike Schrandt, county facilities maintenance manager.

Schrandt said the decision to keep the stones for future use came when the County Center roof was being replaced. Though the new roof called for new materials, there was nothing wrong with the old stones, which were moved to the county gravel pit in Wilmot, Schrandt said.

"We recycled it, and it's sustainable because it got reused," Schrandt said. "It never goes away. It's not organic. It's not going to disappear, because it's stone."

The recycled stones line the older portion of the Brookside building, which is now undergoing renovation work. The landscaping there was changed to mimic the design incorporated in the new community-based rehabilitation facility addition to Brookside, which was completed earlier this year.

Schrandt said the new landscaping at Brookside provided the first of what could be several opportunities to reuse the old roofing material.

"Parks can use it; highways can use it; facilities can use it," Schrandt said. "It will be used."

The stones are not the only new landscaping feature at Brookside that uses recycled materials – Schrandt said a retaining wall built recently on the northeast side of the building is made of larger fieldstones that were recovered from various county highway projects, then also stored at the Wilmot gravel pit.

The recycling of stones and boulders is in line with the efforts of Sustainable Kenosha County, an initiative led by County Executive Jim Kreuser in partnership with the UW-Extension and the Department of Public Works and Development Services.

Recent Sustainable Kenosha County projects include the installation of energy-efficient LED exterior lighting on multiple county campuses, where 100-watt fixtures were replaced with 35-watt units with much longer lifespans.

Also, a native prairie is being established on land north of the County Center building, using funding provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"Being sustainable means doing things in new ways to benefit the environment and improve the quality of life for our current and future residents," Kreuser said. "Reusing stones that otherwise would have gone in a landfill, improving the energy efficiency of our buildings, and restoring native prairie are just a few of the ways we can be responsible stewards of our environment."

For more details about Sustainable Kenosha County, please visit http://www.kenoshacounty.org/1785/Sustainable-Kenosha-County. More information about the Kenosha County Division of Facilities is at http://www.kenoshacounty.org/501/Facilities. Brookside Care Center information may be accessed online at http://brooksidecarecenter.com or on Facebook at http://facebook.com/BrooksideCareCenter.

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