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By Maggie Beute

Asylum Lake cleanup set for Saturday

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Marti Faketty thinks it's time for a celebration.

She and a group of seven other women are inviting people to come out on Saturday to clean up the south beach of Asylum Lake in Kalamazoo, at the end of Winchell Avenue, to show their support for the nature preserve. The cleanup begins at 1 p.m.

Citing community opposition, Western Michigan University has put on hold its plans to convert part of the Asylum Lake area into a business and research park near the intersection of Drake Road and Parkview Avenue.

The cleanup will be preceded by a ceremony at a nearby meadow. Participants will construct an American Indian medicine wheel out of 32 large rocks that Faketty has collected from local quarries.

"It's a place where you can go and meditate and honor the earth," she said.

"It's a sacred tradition — a way of healing the earth and healing people as well who use the structure."

After the ceremony, participants will proceed to the lake to collect litter and debris.

Faketty encourages people to wear sturdy shoes and clothes and to bring garbage bags, colored ribbons and musical instruments.

The ribbons will be tied to a fence along Drake to show the participants' concern for the land.

After the cleanup, people can listen to a talk by Dok Tael Stevens, an environmental hydrogeology major at WMU who published a book on Asylum Lake entitled "Haven: A Treatise on Asylum Lake."

Participants also will have an opportunity to present their own poems and thoughts. The afternoon will end with music and dancing.

"I thought it would be a good way for people to meet each other who were concerned ... it's a way of keeping the energy up and not letting the issue get lost," Faketty said.

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