

A Tree's Plea

*No matter where you go, you might find me
A town, city, or out in the country
My leafy arms can provide you with shade
And are one of the ways your air is made*

*I can be any size, from short to tall
And I'm here winter, spring, summer, and fall
My leaves are green when it turns warm and hot
They change color and drop off when it's not*

*This is the way things are supposed to be
It's a cycle in the life of a tree
As the years have passed, things have gotten bad
The earth is no longer like I once had*

*My numbers have dwindled, making me scared
And many places I sowed have been-bared
This is because of things some people do
And why you don't see me like you used to*

*Please, I need your help so that I can be
A productive, fully grown, healthy tree
You mustn't ignore what I'm asking of you
Because it will just get worse if you do*

*I'm praying you will keep my hopes alive
And make some changes so we can survive
Return the earth to how it used to be
So that it's safe for a human and tree*

— **Eugene T. Frazier**
City Councilman



Arbor Day 2022

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Ninety elementary students from the Allegany County Public Schools After School Program recently celebrated Arbor Day at Constitution Park in Cumberland, MD, by planting trees and participating in activities relating to the national celebration. The two day fun filled program has become a county tradition as teachers, students, Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the City of Cumberland staffs collaborate to organize the April event.

Brad Ditto, After School Coordinator for Allegany County Public Schools, credits previous staff members and volunteers for creating environmental opportunities and resources for students. “In the past, Gary and Pat Delaney secured grants and coordinated a variety of outdoor activities. Kids had a fabulous time and Arbor Day has now become one of our important events. Kids get their hands dirty and enjoy the day.”

Teachers enthusiastically support the event. Lisa Chaney, After School Coordinator from John Humbird Elementary School, notes that “Students are so excited about the field trip. They have been learning about the environment, so they know what is going on when they arrive for Arbor Day. Students love it!”

Draven Blair, Georges Creek Elementary School student, summarized his experience in the program. “We learned how to care for trees and plant them properly. We actually put a tree in the ground. It's a good program.”

Trees were made available through the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forestry Service via an Urban and Community Forestry Grant written by Cumberland's Shade Tree Commission. The local commission applied for the grants through DNR's Tree-Mendous Program that has



assisted more than 3,000 communities, parks and schools in planting trees and shrubs, including those supplied to the Constitution Park Arbor Day event. In addition to state assistance, volunteers readily supported all aspects of the day from classroom activities to the planting of trees.

Dan Hedderick, Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forester, stressed the importance of Arbor Day in drawing attention to the benefits of tree enhanced surroundings. “Arbor Day highlights the environmental, educational and health benefits of trees. We know that trees provide shade and cool our cities temperature by up to 10 degrees. We also know that tree canopies reduce stress and improve the overall health of children by providing a pastoral environment.”

The local Arbor Day event proved to be noteworthy for another reason. According to Marian Honeezy, supervisor of Urban and Community Forestry for the state, “The Constitution Park Arbor Day event was particularly important because the trees planted by students were the first to be counted within the 5 Million Tree program. Next year there will be another award and more trees will be planted on Arbor Day. The state of Maryland has committed to planting 5 million trees during the next decade and we are always ready to help groups complete the application.” Maryland’s 5 Million Tree program was passed by the General Assembly in 2021 and contains the pledge of planting and maintaining 5 million native trees in the state by 2031.



Top: Groups of students from the Allegany County Public Schools After School Program planted trees at Constitution Park in Cumberland, MD, during an Arbor Day event.

Students enjoyed getting their hands dirty while learning the proper way to plant a tree from Dan Hedderick, Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forester.

Marian also endorsed the environmental benefits of planting trees. “Trees planted in urban areas not only make individuals feel better, but they also clean the air, reduce water runoff, and improve mental health. Trees can accomplish all of that for a pittance of money.”

The city of Cumberland enthusiastically supports Arbor Day events and has received recognition from the Arbor Day Foundation as a Tree City for the past 25 years. Instrumental in the city’s efforts is the 9 member Shade Tree Commission that advocates for sound urban management practices and strives to preserve and enhance the beauty of Cumberland. Members were present at Constitution Park and supported the student activities.

Anita Simmons, who served as City of Cumberland Forester, collaborated with partners Diane Johnson of the Cumberland Parks and Recreation Department and Sherry Frick of the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service to plan the educational activities. According to Anita, “We planned for 3 student experiential activity stations. The groups rotated around the park and participated in related projects, including tree planting. Volunteers from the Master Gardeners were a tremendous help during the program. The students had a great time with lots of fun learning how important trees are and how to plant them.”

Activities included lessons from Project Learning Tree, a curriculum that uses resources to engage children in learning about the environment through the lens of trees and forests. According to Sherry, “In one activity students played the role of trees and what they do. Students were divided into parts of the tree and then simulated what each part of the tree does. The purpose was for students to learn the parts of a tree.”

The local Arbor Day coincides with similar activities across the country where students learn to plant, maintain, and preserve



Top: Younger students from Georges Creek Elementary listen intently to Adam Miller, Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forester, while teacher, Ellen Walker observes.

Students had a great time planting the trees and then rotating around the park for other related projects.

trees. The idea for such a celebration is credited to Nebraska newspaper editor, Julius Morton, who realized the ecological importance of trees, particularly in his state. In 1872, Morton proposed a day that would encourage Nebraskans to plant trees in their neighborhood. Originally to be called “Sylvan Day,” the organizers changed the name to Arbor Day, literally “tree day,” for the debut on April 10, 1872. The event was a success and similar programs spread throughout the country. Since the inaugural Arbor Day, millions of trees have been correctly planted in celebrations that are normally held during April.

Students from the After School programs at John Humbird, Georges Creek, Westernport and South Penn schools were rewarded for their efforts by receiving “tree cookies” and sugar maple seedlings.

In addition, they also participated in ceremonies conducted by City of Cumberland officials, DNR staff members and adult volunteers. All participants agreed that Arbor Day will be eagerly anticipated in 2023.



Students enjoyed being part of the “shovel crew” to finish planting their tree.



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