

The Journal

Tree planting event benefits homeowners

April 10, 2017

Jeff McCoy - Journal Staff writer jmccoy@journal-news.net



Journal photos by Jeff McCoy Urban Watershed Forester Tanner Haid of the Cacapon Institute demonstrates how to plant a tree to volunteers that helped plant 50 trees near U.S. 340.

CHARLES TOWN — Cacapon Institute has awarded Spruce Hill Homeowners' Association a Carla Hardy WV Project CommuniTree "Tree Kit" to plant at the south end of Spruce Hill Estates Homeowners association's common area along U.S. 340 near Washington High School in Charles Town.

"Cacapon Institute and our partners are proud to support this community tree planting project," said Tanner Haid, Cacapon Institute's urban watershed forester.

Since 2008, they have planted — many times with the assistance of the community — 4,612 trees at 141 planting events. 10,093 volunteers assisted during that time period, donating 18,242 hours of community service.

Over 40 volunteers showed up to help plant, water and secure the 50 trees that were awarded in the grant.

"We are excited to receive the trees from the CommuniTree project. We look forward to enhancing the beauty of our development, as well as the U.S. 340 corridor," said Jane Carter, project leader and Spruce

Hill Estates homeowners association vice president. “I think learning the correct methods to plant trees will be a great learning experience for all the volunteers.”

Some of the volunteers were residents of Spruce Hill Estates, others were high school students from Washington High School and there were volunteers from the surrounding communities that just wanted to help their neighbors.

“It really is a community effort here. It kind of takes the whole village, and that’s what makes it work. It ties into that community thing — it takes them all working together for this project to succeed, not just in the short term but in the long term, which is a more important part in keeping them alive and maintaining them,” Haid said.

Haid listed many of the benefits of the trees during a short lesson on how to plant them.

“This adds to the canopy of the area, which adds (value) to our homeowners. It keeps the air clean, especially with (U.S.) 340 right there. It’s going to make the drive along 340 look nicer, give a little more privacy to the homes that are here,” Carter said.

Haid further explained the positive impact of the tree planting.

“Our goal as an organization is education. Educate the people about the benefits of trees and how to properly plant trees, and how that is going to positively impact them as a community,” Haid said.

“Like for an example, this HOA — some of the goals, in addition to blocking the wind — hopefully they will see an increase in property values in a long-term trend. There are studies that show how property value can increase if you have more trees and tree canopy.”

Haid added how planting trees is also a cost-effective practice.

“This is common space. As part of their HOA fees, they all pay to maintain it. There is a dollar value associated with every time they have to mow it,” Haid said. “So, for the first couple of years, they are going to mow around the trees. Eventually, they are going to let this area naturalize so all the habitat they will create and all the reductions in cost that they will see as homeowners will be a very good thing.”

For the homeowners association, there will be future savings in their expenses.

“Right now, we have such a large landscaping bill that we have to do something. We spend almost a third of our HOA dues (for) landscaping,” Carter said.

Cacapon Institute has identified how they can help the Eastern Panhandle.

“There’s a really big need in our area,” Haid said. “In Jefferson County alone, there is at least 100-150 HOAs, and Cacapon Institute has done an urban tree canopy assessment of all the HOAs in Jefferson County saying, ‘Let’s use aerial imagery to look at what the land cover is.’ So, for example, an HOA that has 100 acres, you might have 5 percent of that as hard surface, like road and maybe another 5 percent is surfaces like buildings or houses, and then what we found was typically the other 80 percent. Ninety percent is grass, it’s green space. They mow it as homeowners or as a community.”

Now Haid is looking for more volunteers, especially for a special upcoming day.

“Our biggest weekend is Earth Day. We have five tree plantings that day. We have one at South Berkeley Volunteer Fire Department,” Haid said. “We’ll be at St. James Catholic Church, Burlington Fire Department, River Ridge HOA in Morgan County and Briggs Animal Adoption Center. April 22 is a big day.”

To volunteer or for more information, contact Haid at 540-335-0687, THaid@cacaponinstitute.org or go to cacaponinstitute.org.

Staff writer Jeff McCoy can be reached at jmccoy@journal-news.net.

SOURCE: <http://www.journal-news.net/news/local-news/2017/04/tree-planting-event-benefits-homeowners/>