

Volunteers plant 1,500 trees at Rachel Carson Middle School

By Gregg MacDonald

Volunteers from two local companies, along with nonprofit organization Fairfax ReLeaf, helped plant nearly 1,500 trees at an Oak Hill middle school last week.

On Friday, Nov. 7, nearly 50 volunteers from printing company RISO and Level 3 Communications partnered with school staff, Fairfax ReLeaf staff and the Virginia Department of Forestry to plant 1,500 trees on four acres of land at Rachel Carson Middle School.

RISO launched a partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation earlier this year to help plant 100,000 trees across the nation.

"We are very pleased to partner with leading organizations such as Fairfax ReLeaf and Level 3 Communications to bring this tree-planting effort to the Washington, D.C. area," said Pat Pharr, D.C. branch sales manager for RISO Inc.

Among the types of trees planted were red oaks, cedars, dogwoods and pines.

"Our goal is to restore large numbers of native trees on public and common land where funding for landscaping is lacking," said Taylor Beach, executive director of Fairfax ReLeaf. "To help meet this goal, we are extremely grateful for the generous tree donations from RISO and the volunteer efforts by Level 3 Communications."

Jim McGlone, urban forest conservationist for the Virginia Department of Forestry, said that Fairfax County has set a goal of attaining 45 percent of "canopy cover" throughout the county, but that private development threatens to undermine the effort.

"We need to plant about 22,000 acres to achieve that, and there are only about 8,000 acres of public land that we can currently plant on," he said.

McGlone said that when trees are planted in areas where grass currently needs to be mowed, it aids the environment by eliminating the need to run gas-powered mowers and trimmers.

"Ecosystems develop in those areas and ticks are not a problem because they have natural predators that keep them in check," he added.

Other tree-planting initiatives also occurred last week across the county at nearby Franklin Intermediate School, Greenbriar West Elementary and others.

In McLean, board members and volunteers of the McLean Trees Foundation braved the traffic on Dolley Madison Boulevard, between Elm Street and Churchill Road, to replace five of the dead Bradford pear trees that have graced the median there for decades.

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