



Sunday, May 10, 2009

Planters dig for History Center "Tree Day"

By David Hannula,
Contributing Writer

Around 25 volunteers showed up ready to work at "Tree Day 2009" at the Sherburne History Center Saturday morning.

The group of parents and children came out to take advantage of the fine spring weather, and to help plant a double row of evergreens on the future site of the county fairgrounds, which will serve as a windbreak and shade area in years to come.

The Norway and white pine seedlings were purchased from a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources nursery by the Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) office in Elk River and donated to the planting program, according to coordinator Gina Hugo of the SWCD.

Marking flags, boxes of seedlings, shovels, wheelbarrows and mulch piles were all set up and waiting for the volunteers as the program got underway at 9 a.m. with an overview of area forestation efforts from History Center Programs Director Bobbie Scott. She began by telling the group about the millions of trees that have been planted in Sherburne County since the 1930's.

She noted that the trees were put in to help anchor the soil and to prevent the fierce sandstorms that blew across the open fields, stripping away topsoil and covering the local roads so deep in sand that snowplows had to be called out to clear the highways in mid-summer.

Scott also taught the volunteers an easy way to tell White Pine from the Norway type by checking for needles that grow in clumps of five on the tree: "W-h-i-t-e has five letters", Scott said, "the same as the number of needles on a white pine clump."

At the planting site, Hugo displayed a seedling and explained the root trimming process which allows the tree to take in water in its new location. The volunteers were then divided into two sections, the "Norway" group and the "white pine" group, and then subdivided again into diggers, planters, watering crews and mulch managers.

The planting was completed well before the scheduled 11 a.m., with two long lines of fresh seedlings one day to form a windbreak on the southwest line of the property.

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MORE SEEDLINGS. Gina Hugo of the Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) office carries more fresh seedlings down the line as Lafayette Bade, left, and other volunteers put the finishing touches on a freshly planted seedling. (Photos by David Hannula.)



PLANTATION. Volunteers Ethan Light, left, Alex McDowall and Jessica Langlais prepared a site for a new pine seedling.

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Sunday, May 10, 2009

Scouts and others work the local lake beaches

By Lynn Woolhouse
Staff Writer



PLANTING TO RESTORE THE POINT, members of the MN B.A.S.S. State Federation, Pack 93, Troop 89, BLCLA and Sherburne Soil and Water worked between Mitchell and Big Lake Saturday. (Photo by Lynn Woolhouse)

Working alongside the DNR, Sherburne Soil and Water and the Big Lake Community Lakes Association, the MN B.A.S.S. State Federation and Troop 93 and Pack 89 planted prairie roses and willows along the point between Mitchell and Big Lake Saturday morning.

As part of the shoreland re-vegetation project, the task also provided a conservation project for the Cub and Boy Scouts that will help restore the land along the point to help protect against future erosion.

"This is a busier time of year for us," said Paul Perovich, state youth director for the MN B.A.S.S. State Federation.

"We have over 350 projects we are helping statewide," he says.

After the plantings were completed, the land was then overseeded with grass seeds.

The DNR, BLCLA and Sherburne Soil and Water will return in June to finish the project as they will then see the progress of growth.

"We will then plant Prairie Cord Grass and Lake Sedge," said Bill Bronder, resource conservationist for Sherburne Soil and Water.

The purpose of the projects around Big and Mitchell Lakes is to protect the good water quality by establishing native shoreland restoration and stabilization at sites that have been pre-determined to be in need of restorations.

Saturday, May 23, 2009

Middle school students plant butterfly gardens

By Lynn Woolhouse
Staff Writer



WORKING HARD ON REWARD DAY, BLMS students spent the day planting butterfly gardens. Participating students were Alexandra Smith, Sarah Impola, Jessica Prettyman, Madelyn Zinken, Samantha Young, Mary Peterson, Cassie Jahn, Shelby Kline, Mikaela Krzmarcik, Madysen Johnson, Bethany Lindquist, Meghan Schroeder, Lucas Christensen, Peter Olson, Peter Wallace, John Wallace, Kayla Richards, Olivia Rolland and Kevin Carston. (Photo by Lynn Woolhouse.)

Enjoying their last reward day of the year, some BLMS students decided not to venture to the movies or community center but planted native butterfly gardens at school.

"They worked so hard," said biology teacher Erin McMahon who also advises the school's green club.

With the help of Diana Quinn, John Moos and Resource Conservationist Gina Hugo of Sherburne Soil and Water, students from sixth, seventh and eighth grade designed, planted, labeled and sodded the gardens.

"They did all the work as us adults pretty much just watched them," said McMahon proudly.

Coming up with the idea themselves, McMahon says it just shows how the students want to help the environment.

"Not all of them are members of the green club, but they all worked so hard," she says.

This is the first year for the green club at the BLMS.

They meet every Monday 2-3:30 p.m.

McMahon says the students help promote recycling and have done environment focused crafts with Liberty Elementary students.

Saturday, May 23, 2009

Shoreland buffers erected



Shoreland buffer in progress at the point on Big Lake. Bundles of pine trees thinned from a Christmas tree farm will protect the new plants from waves. (Submitted photo.)

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation office is contributing these articles.)

The Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District has worked with lakeshore owners to establish natural shoreline buffers on several lakes in the County including the Briggs Lake Chain, Big Elk Lake, Little Elk Lake and Lake Orono. This year several projects are in progress on Big and Mitchell Lakes. These buffers provide benefits to water quality and wildlife. Studies have shown that storm water runoff from residential lakeshore lots can be 10 times higher than for lakeshore with natural cover. This results in a dramatic increase in pollutant loading to lakes and streams. These pollutants cause excessive algae blooms in lakes. A shoreline

buffer consisting of a dense cover of native grasses, wildflowers and shrubs filters out much of the pollution in runoff. Soils with natural cover also tend to absorb more water because the deep root systems promote better infiltration resulting in less runoff.

Native shoreland plants tend to do a better job of holding soil in place and preventing soil erosion as compared to turf grasses because their root systems can grow to a depth of several feet. Turf grass roots grow to a depth of only several inches.

Shoreline buffers will also create habitat for wildlife. Property owners who have installed buffers in recent years have reported seeing frogs, turtles, humming birds and butterflies that were not present before the buffer was installed.