



Middletown holds tree-planting event

by Robin Maliszewskyj

We are trying to increase the tree canopy percentage in the town. It is very low, one of the lowest in the county," said Middletown Planner and head of the Sustainability Committee, Cindy Unangst. "We want to lead by example, to show homeowners we are trying to do our part."

Unangst said the Town applied for and received a grant this year that they had attempted to win last year but did not, from the Maryland Urban and Community Forest Committee (MUCFC), for \$1,000. These funds, plus about another \$1,200 contribution from the Town, covered a project to plant 58 native trees along Middletown Parkway.

Unangst said, once she received the grant award, she was looking for an opportunity to generate a lot of volunteers, and so looked for a day that students were off school, voila! Friday, November 8.

"It was a great success, with more than 40 people showing up," Unangst said. "I was overwhelmed. It was great to see that kind of response.

Volunteers included families with children and Scout groups. Unangst said numerous students brought community service volunteer hour forms for her to sign (Scouts, school, National Honor Society, etc.), which she was happy to do. With so many volunteers, however, they were done in less than two hours!

Unangst said the trees were purchased through a program called TREE-mendous Maryland, which is through the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The Middletown Public Works Department rented an auger to dig all the holes, so volunteers simply had to replace dirt in the holes to the proper level, add the trees, and fill in.

All told, the group planted 15 sycamore, 15 pin oak, 14 red maple, and 14 sweet gum trees.

Unangst said she had reapplied for yet another grant she did not receive last year, "Keep Maryland Beautiful."

She said, "The next time we get grant funding, we plan to plant trees in the green area between the two parking lots at Rensberg Park. That will be a great volunteer event! We are keeping our fingers crossed for the next time."

Unangst said the Town plans to send a letter to residents with the January water and sewer bill, encouraging them to plant trees on their own, and providing resources, such as how to determine the best species to plant, and a \$25 coupon through DNR.

"The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in their shade, has started to understand the meaning of life."



Paul Fox, Gavin Witt, and Fox's grandchildren Alice and Hazel, work to plant trees as part of a volunteer event in Middletown. Photo courtesy of Cindy Unangst.



Janet and Paul Fox of the Middletown Main Street Board and their son-in-law Chad Tiede work with a group of about 40 people to plant trees along Middletown Parkway. Photo courtesy of Cindy Unangst.



Carolyn Spehr and her children, Samantha, planting trees along Middletown Parkway, sponsored by the Town of Middletown and the which received a grant covering part of the cost. Photo courtesy of Cindy Unangst.

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