

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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GOVERNOR PARTICIPATES IN 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF ARBOR DAY IN NEW JERSEY

Stating that trees and woodlands directly improve the quality of the environment and the quality of life in cities and towns, Gov. Whitman today joined Mercer County school children in the 50th anniversary celebration of Arbor Day in New Jersey at Mill Hill Park in Trenton.

"While we continue to focus on reducing emissions from cars and factories, planting trees can help ensure cleaner air for years to come," the Governor said.

"Trees influence more than the quality of air we breathe," she said. "They also help fight soil erosion, control flooding, and promote a sustainable environment. At the same time mature trees give shade and natural beauty to our city streets and neighborhoods."

"What's more, active involvement in programs that plan and care for trees enriches a community's sense of mutual responsibility," Gov. Whitman said. "Tree planting projects also remind people that they can work together to make their surrounding environment healthier and keep our Garden State green."

The Governor said more is learned every day about the importance of trees to urban air quality. She said a recent project conducted by students from Jersey City High School and Rutgers University revealed that trees in Jersey City removed 788 tons of carbon dioxide a year.

She said the people of New Jersey have shown they care about the state's environment by approving last year's open space referendum that will enable the state to preserve one million acres of farmland and open space over the next decade.

"As we work together to save New Jersey's remaining undeveloped fields and farmland, we must rededicate ourselves to improving the quality of life in our cities," Gov. Whitman said. "I believe the success of long-term environmental protection depends in part on renewing our cities."

The Governor and Commissioner Bob Shinn of the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) toured some of the 20 environmental interactive exhibits at Mill Hill Park showcasing the benefits of trees to a healthy and sustainable environment, and planted trees with student winners of several statewide Arbor Day contests.

The Governor also signed an Arbor Day Proclamation and was presented with a framed leaf print by David Shaw, president of the Community Forestry Council, and Roni Olizi, trustee of the New Jersey Shade Tree Foundation. The print was designed by David Johnson, assistant regional forester of the New Jersey Forest Service.

"Just one large shade tree can provide enough oxygen for ten people in one year and produce 3.8 pounds of oxygen per hour while extracting 5.1 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere," Shinn said.

DEP has established a Community Forestry Program to help counties and municipalities develop activities to foster the care and growth of community trees. Additionally, DEP is in the process of carrying out a new federal program, the Urban Forestry Demonstration Project, to promote the "greening" of cities through tree plantings and long-term planning. The state also has created a new license plate, "Treasure Our Trees," available from any motor vehicle agency or by calling 1-888-486-3339. Monies from the sale of these special plates fund tree planting projects statewide.

Other speakers at the event included Trenton Mayor Douglas Palmer, Mercer County Executive Bob Prunetti, Tina Schweitzer of the National Arbor Day Foundation, David Mizejewsk of the National Tree Trust and State Forester Lester Alpaugh. The Trenton High School Gospel Choir performed.

Sponsors of the event were the DEP's New Jersey Forest Service, Community Forestry Program, New Jersey Community Forestry Council, Trees for Trenton, A&P;, Bally's Park Place, Chesapeake Outdoor PNE Media, Connectiv, Kings Supermarket, Liberty Science Center, Marcal Paper Mills, Inc., PSE&G;, Riephoff Sawmill, Inc., Target, N. J. International Society of Arboriculture, New Jersey Shade Tree Federation, New Jersey Tree Foundation, Committee for the Advancement of Arboriculture, Arborist Association, Society of Certified Tree Experts, Princeton Nurseries and Rockland Electric.

Partners in the event were Artworks, City of Trenton, Mercer County, Isles, Inc., Mercer County Soil Conservation District, New Jersey Tree Foundation, Old Mill Society and the Trenton Downtown Association.

Attached is a list of contest winners.