

Community Celebrates Earth and Arbor Day

Story and photos by
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The Aberdeen Proving Ground community marked Earth and Arbor Day celebrations with tree plantings, environmental displays, poster contest awards and a Tree City U.S.A. presentation at the site of the BRAC Forest Mitigation Project near Gadsend Road in the Aberdeen Area April 29.

John Wrobel, Directorate of Safety, Health and Environment, hosted the event which included remarks by Tim McNamara, deputy to the APG Garrison commander, and Wayne Merkel, regional forester, Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Wrobel said that the stewardship, conservation and restoration of the environmental resources at APG are some of the visions of the U.S. Army Environmental Command which are exhibited in the reforestation effort.

"In addition to growing trees, today we celebrate the future with youths from our community who are here to receive awards for their accomplishments in a poster contest whose theme is, Trees Breathe Life," Wrobel said. "Today we celebrate the people who care about trees and the people who plant them and nurture them to allow us to celebrate their value into the future."



Kindergarten-1st grade category

McNamara said, the celebration gives us an opportunity to highlight protecting our environment and to review how trees do that in particular.

He reviewed how trees impact quality of life and said that, "as we follow the life cycle of trees throughout the year, it will help us renew our commitment as environmental stewards."

He congratulated the poster contest winners, telling them that "your fresh, young ideas make a difference."

"We look with pride on the re-forestation here," he added. "And we are proud to join ranks with surrounding Tree City USA communities."



1st-2nd grade category

Merkel congratulated McNamara and his staff for "the outstanding job they do here at APG."

"Forests and trees are good for the bay," Merkel said, noting that forests retain 80 percent of phosphorous rainwater runoff before they reach the bay.

He said that Tree City USA recognizes those who meet the standards in sustaining the environment noting that APG has been awarded the 2007 Green Award for its stewardship.

He presented McNamara with a National Arbor Day Growth award and other gifts for the installation's accomplishments.

"APG has met our requirements since 2005," Merkel said, singling out Wrobel as one of the individuals who make it happen.



3rd-4th grade category

"Thanks for your effective leadership, commitment and dedication to natural resources," he said.

The Growth Award is presented to APG in cooperation with and sponsored by the National Association of State Foresters and the USDA Forest Service for continuous achievement and commitment to an effective, ongoing forestry program.

Len Wrobel, a contractor with Mar-Len Environmental and DSHE, said that the 880 trees planted in the BRAC Forest Mitigation area were planted in one weekend with trees obtained from a local nursery. He said that 60 percent of the trees are oak trees and mixed species associated with oak trees.

"There are eight species altogether, all local to the region," Wrobel said.



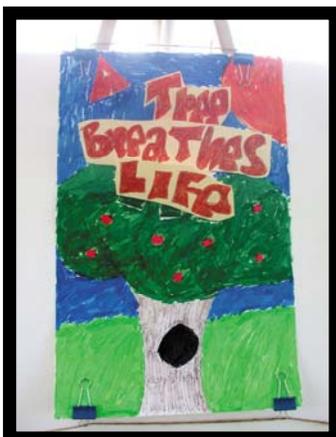
Middle school category

He said that the 4.4 acre forest was intentionally located near an Aquifer Recharge Area and that the new forest replaces those trees removed due to construction for BRAC projects.

"These trees and subsequent tree plantings mitigate BRAC construction impact," he said.

Displays by AEC and APG environmental vendors included EA Engineering, Science and Technology, which displayed a wetland that demonstrated how forests clean rainwater and help prevent erosion and a large poster-brochure explaining its Bald Eagle Conservation, Shoreline Stabilization and Wetland Creation/Restoration projects. EA Engineering representatives, geologists Michael Hertz and Anna-Lisa Marcum and Sam Voss, explained their missions

and answered visitors' questions.



High school category

EA Engineering, Science and Technology develops fully integrated, multidisciplinary solutions for global clients providing technical expertise from project conceptualization through final construction and continues with long-term operations and maintenance.

Weston Solutions displayed a modular Green Roof System or GreenGrid® in which the roof of a building is covered with vegetation and soil, to reduce heating costs, reduce storm water runoff, filter pollutants and provide other benefits.

"Green roofs cut energy costs by providing an extra layer of insulation," said Kristen Rigney, associate project scientist.

Rigney and project scientist Charles Rapone, along with Weston Solutions vice president Peter Ciotoli answered questions about GreenGrid® and gave visitors complimentary plants to start their own gardens.

“We use sedums because they’re very drought resistant and low maintenance,” Rapone said adding that gardens can also consist of fruit-bearing plants or herbs.

Sedums are hardy plants of which there are about 400 species varying from annual groundcovers to shrubs, preferred for their water-storing leaves.

He said that the green roof system technology, used widely in Europe, is catching on in the states.

“They just installed one at Tobyhanna Army Depot [Pennsylvania] and the Ford Motor Company is also using them,” he said, adding that the nearest system to APG in use is at the National Park Service Center for Urban Ecology in Washington, D.C.

Weston Solutions, Inc. delivers integrated, sustainable solutions for environmental restoration, property redevelopment, design/build construction, green buildings and clean energy.

As part of the Earth and Arbor Day Celebration, AEC provided pine seedlings and wildflower seeds for visitors to take home.

“I’m going to plant them both in my yard,” said Cindy Powels, a DSHE environmental engineer, as she picked out her seedlings and seeds.

Poster contest

A 3rd grader at Roye-Williams Elementary School, drew a heart on her tree.

“I drew a heart because people have hearts, and trees are living things so they must have hearts too,” she said.

A 6th grader at Aberdeen Middle School, said that her drawing of a tree atop the planet was symbolic.

“It shows that some people believe that money and love make the world go round,” she said. “I believe that trees do. Without them there would be no oxygen, food, shelter or shade.”

A kindergartener at Roye-Williams, said she added a rainbow to her entry to symbolize happiness.

“A rainbow means happiness,” she said. “All the trees, flowers and plants are happy.”