

By the time you read this we hope that the 15<sup>th</sup> Fifth Grade Tree will be planted near the track on the playground area. The official Arbor Day celebration and planting is set for 1:30 on February 28<sup>th</sup>. Last Thursday two teams of students located the site, cleared the sod and grass from the site and set posts around the site with caution tape to keep others away. The sod and soil removed was placed in compost heaps in the gardens and orchard areas. Students determined how big of an area needed to be cleared by multiplying the diameter of the pot the tree was in by 5 coming to a ten foot diameter circle to be cleared. They used a rope attached to a stake in the middle to mark the circumference of the area to be cleared. By the time they were done about six wheelbarrows of soil and sod was removed. It is always a good idea to remove the sod and not return it to the planting hole. A new tree has a better chance of survival if it does not have to compete with sod for available nutrients and moisture.

This year the tree to be planted is a Chinkapin Oak. It is being removed from a 30 gallon pot and should grow to be 50 to 70 feet tall eventually. Eighty one percent of the 5<sup>th</sup> graders earned at least \$3 or worked during recess in the school to earn a scholarship. These 121 students are enjoying a dessert party provided by the garden volunteers prior to the tree planting. We are so proud of all these students who earned their money to pay for the tree that they are donating to the school.

Mrs. Krenek, now a garden volunteer, for whom the garden is named and who was the lead science and math teacher at the school for many years, gave the lesson in class the past two weeks. She gave a short history of the planting of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade trees and some interesting stories about a few of the trees that survived disasters and now are proudly growing on campus. The first tree planted 15 years ago was run over by the lawn crew and then survived after a large pine fell on it during hurricane Ike. Each donated tree has a plaque nearby naming the type of tree and the year the class donated it to the school. The campus is once again looking much more like an oak forest than it did 15 years ago. We all are so glad that Mrs. Krenek had the vision to start this tradition 15 years ago.

Last Thursday was again a good harvest day. Sugar snap peas, cauliflower, cabbage, kohlrabi, broccoli, lettuce, carrots, turnips, radishes, mizuna, kale, and French sorrel were sent home with students. It was our best lettuce harvest in years and many students took at least two heads of lettuce home. Lettuce seed was planted in the holes of the concrete blocks that form the borders of several of the beds in the orchard last December. It all matured at the same time in late February, so was harvested and sent home. We would be interested to know if you were able to use the produce and how you used it. You can always give us feedback by going to the Growers website and clicking on feedback. <http://www.ofegrowers.org/contact.html>

The OFE Growers is a group of parents, grandparents, and community members who volunteer to maintain the gardens and nature areas at the school. We are a 501-c-3 all volunteer non-profit organization. Emily Fortner, a 5<sup>th</sup> grade science and math teacher, is the president of the Growers organization. We welcome new volunteers and support from you. Call Mrs. Fortner at 281-641-2834 or e-mail her at: [emily.fortner@humbleisd.net](mailto:emily.fortner@humbleisd.net), if you have questions or can help in any way. Donations can be sent to: OFE Growers, PO Box 1525, Kingwood, TX 77325. We appreciate your donations to help fund the gardening program. And yes, think of the value of all those groceries your students bring home.

Please go to the web site for the Growers to see answers to puzzles, the tree rat video, photos of the students in action in the gardens, and much more. [www.ofegrowers.org](http://www.ofegrowers.org) Some teachers even give extra credit to students who are the first to answer questions posted on the web site.