

## Growers News for the Week of March 5, 2018

Arbor Day at Oak Forest is a really big event! This annual tradition began in 2004 when science and math teacher, Deborah Krenek challenged the fifth grade students to plant a tree as their going away gift to the school. Every year since then, each fifth grade student is asked to earn three dollars to purchase a 30-gallon oak tree. Fourteen trees have been added to the campus over the years through this program.

This year, virtually all students did find a way to earn their share of the cost of the tree. They had been told they could not simply ask their parents for the money without earning it. Arbor Day was planned for February 22<sup>nd</sup>, but due to rain had to be moved to March 1<sup>st</sup>. The tree selected by the OFE Growers committee for this year is a Monterrey Oak. A beautiful thirty gallon tree was purchased from Trees for Houston.

On the planting day, teams of students were assigned to various tasks. A team prepared the site by removing all sod. The next team dug an appropriate hole for the root ball. Students determined that the hole was to be 16 inches deep at the center and sloped upward with a ten foot diameter. With the soil loosened to this diameter new roots will easily grow into the improved soil placed back into the hole. Other teams filled the hole with soil amendments and the original soil. A watering team made sure all the soil was irrigated as it was replaced. Another team mulched the tree with pine needles donated by parents and community members. Finally a temporary fence was installed around the tree to protect it as it is located on the playground.

At the planting and dedication ceremony several students dedicated the tree to the school. Principal Linda Schmidt was on hand to accept the students' gift! An engraved plaque was put into the ground near the tree. It bears the species name and common name of the tree and that it was given by the class of 2018. A time capsule was also buried near the plaque filled with memorabilia students had collected. When students in this class are seniors in 2025, they will be invited back to Oak Forest Elementary to dig it up and open the capsule.

In celebration for a job well done both in raising the funds and planting the trees, the Growers organization will have a dessert party in the outdoor classroom for the 5<sup>th</sup> graders this Thursday during their recess period. Lots of goodies will be enjoyed by all.

Mrs. Sanders reports that there are still 46 jars of fig jam, 2 jars of ginger fig jam, 6 tangy pickle relish and 6 pints of pickles from the 2017 canning season. E-mail her ([josanders@verizon.net](mailto:josanders@verizon.net) if you can help us liquidate these. Make us a deal we can't refuse or buy four and get a fifth jar for free.

We have received well over 1000 bags of leaves and pine needles this fall and winter. These are being used to mulch around trees and to make compost. Recently someone has been taking advantage of the situation by dumping lots of brush and trash along the east property line. This is not appropriate and is illegal. Dumping is prohibited by state law in the nature areas and into the school dumpsters. If these people are caught they face a stiff fine and possible jail time. We welcome bags of leaves and pine needles but nothing else. If you observe someone doing this, take a picture of the vehicle license number and contact the school office. The school district spends thousands of dollars each year hauling away trash from school property. This is money that would more appropriately be spent educating our children. Do your part by reporting illegal activities!

The OFE Growers love volunteers! Let us know if you would like to help and to learn to garden at the same time. Mrs. Krenek is our president. Do talk to her or send her an e-mail at: [deborah.krenek@humbleisd.net](mailto:deborah.krenek@humbleisd.net), if you have questions. You can also learn about the OFE Growers and see pictures of the students in action in the gardens by going to their web site at: [www.ofegrowers.org](http://www.ofegrowers.org). The web site is constantly changing. Recently a complete layout of the newly repositioned gardens was added. <http://www.ofegrowers.org/garden-layouts.html>.

**Let's all show our Falcon Pride by eliminating litter on campus and recycling as many items as we can. It makes our campus shine! If everyone picks up one piece of litter daily we will be spotless! Have you recycled your soda can or water bottle and picked up a piece of litter today. Be an example! If you don't, who will?**