

Volunteers, new and old, plant 3,000 trees at Tarboo Creek



Grace Webb

By [Peninsula Daily News](#)

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PORT TOWNSEND — Volunteers from five schools jumped out of bed and into their mud boots last weekend to plant 3,000 native trees and shrubs along Tarboo Creek during the ninth annual Plant-A-Thon.

The 150 children, parents, grandparents and teachers planted the trees during a daylong work party Feb. 1, said Jude Rubin, director of stewardship at the Port Townsend-based Northwest Watershed Institute, which coordinates the annual event.

More than 133,000 trees have been planted in the Tarboo Valley since 2004 to improve conditions for salmon and wildlife.

Of those, more than 31,000 — about 25 percent — have been planted by volunteers through the Plant-A-Thon, Rubin said.

“Getting these kids involved in a day of giving back to Mother Nature is uplifting. It is always one of my favorite days of the year,” said Lucy Congdon Hanson, a Swan School parent who provided the artwork for the 2012 tree card, sold in conjunction with the Plant-A-Thon.

She attended with her husband, Charlie Hanson, a six-time crew leader, and their daughters.

Tarboo conservation

The Plant-A-Thon is part of the overall Tarboo Watershed Program.

The watershed institute and 40 groups and landowners are working to restore and protect the entire Tarboo Creek stream system, from its headwaters to Tarboo-Dabob Bay.

“This was NWI’s most challenging volunteer project yet,” said Peter Bahls, executive director of the watershed institute.

To help establish conifers in areas with reed canary grass, volunteers planted cedar and spruce in hollow log sections and planter boxes.

The logs were donated by the Port Townsend Paper Co.

Cardboard, donated by Kapstone Paper in Longview, was used to cover the reed canary grass before planting willow through it.

Tree-planting tradition

Families have developed their own traditions around Plant-A-Thon, Rubin said.

Swan School fourth-grade student Grace Webb had planted trees at every Plant-A-Thon since kindergarten with help from her grandmother, Barbara Allen.

This year, her grandmother was home sick.

“She really wanted to be here, so I’m going to plant a tree for her this year,” Grace said.

Tiffany and David Drewry brought the whole family.

“It’s our ninth Plant-A-Thon,” said Tiffany, who has attended the event while pregnant and later with her youngest of three children, Grayson, in a baby backpack. “There is no way we would miss it.”

Educators and administrators arrived with shovels in hand to spend their Saturday off with students.

Teacher Karen Akins and Russ Yates, director of Swan School, enjoy a special tradition of organizing the parking and sign-in before they head out to plant trees.

“I just love getting to greet everybody as they come in,” said Yates at the end of the day.

This year, a group of 24 high school students from Chimacum Pi Program and Jefferson Community School, as well as Port Townsend High School Students For Sustainability, served as youth crew leaders, with support from 12 adult crew leaders.

Crew leader Dylan Nichol, a sophomore at the University of Puget Sound, returned from college for his fourth year as a crew leader and ninth year participating in the event.

Tree cards

The planting is also a fundraiser for the JCS and Pi, Swan School and Port Townsend School District’s Opportunity, Community, Experience, Academics and Navigation Program, known as the OCEAN Program.

For each tree they plant, students sell a corresponding “tree card” for \$10 to family and friends.

The person who buys it in turn sends it to honor someone special. The tree cards, created this year by Port Townsend artist Don Tiller, are sent worldwide.

Grants from the state Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Patagonia clothing company, as well as donations from local supporters, pay for the trees and supplies, so all of the funds raised through the sale of tree cards go to support local schools.

“Although the seedlings were put in the ground on Saturday, people are still welcome to sponsor the remaining trees to help schools meet their fundraising goals,” said Kit Pennell, science teacher and Plant-A-Thon coordinator for the Pi Program.

“I regularly use them in place of sympathy cards when friends lose a loved one.”

Honorary tree cards are available at participating schools and at <http://tinyurl.com/pdn-treecards>.

Also, Tiller's original painting, "Thriving Watershed," is being sold to support the program.

To view the painting, contact the artist at 360-379-5450 or don@dontiller.com.

Classroom learning

The program is integrated into classroom learning.

In November, prior to selling cards and planting day, students receive visits from the Northwest Watershed Institute, or NWI, to learn about the habitat needs of salmon.

"These students — even the youngest ones — learn how trees along the stream banks keep waters cool and clean, support the food chain and contribute the large wood that form the pools and riffles salmon need to survive. Students care deeply about the environment," Rubin said.

"They all want to help out."

Originally conceived and organized in 2005 by NWI, OPEPO and Swan School, the annual tree-planting program was expanded to engage more schools in 2009.

The schools have garnered support from hundreds of individuals and dozens of local donors and supporters, including The Food Co-op, Henery's Hardware, Hadlock Veterinary Clinic and Goodman Sanitation, many of which have supported the event for a decade.

April Ryan and Farm's Reach Cafe in Chimacum and Kristen Berg of the Chimacum Corner Farm Store provided lunch for volunteers.

For more information, visit www.nwwatershed.org or phone 360-385-6786.