

# Tree planting to leave legacy at Charles schools

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- COURTESY OF CHARLES COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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Charles public school system is hoping to grow a legacy as staff and students planted 75 trees at five different schools.

The planting effort was done to reduce the environmental effects of heat islands, defined as urbanized zones with more concrete buildings than outlying locations.

School system officials announced the recent effort in a press release on Nov. 10.

According to the release, heat islands experience higher daytime temperature and reduced cooling during nighttime hours.

“What this is making me think about is the whole notion of legacy,” Commissioner President Reuben B. Collins II (D) said. “For a man, there are three ways to maintain your legacy. One is, of course, to have a child. The second is to write a book. And the third is to plant a tree.”

Theodore G. Davis, John Hanson and Mattawoman middle schools as well as North Point and Westlake high schools received 15 trees apiece due to their designations as heat islands.

Trees were planted thanks to multiple grants awarded to The Resilience Authority of Charles County that totaled \$25,000 from the Maryland Urban and Community Forest Committee.

Members of Westlake High School’s Elite Black Men group also participated in the tree-planting duties with assistance from forestry experts, the Student Conservation Association and the Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Center.

The center helped students plant eastern redbuds, American sycamores, white oaks and other native trees.

“We became fast learners on how to plant trees. [Experts] showed us a demonstration by planting one tree and now from one tree, we have 15 trees planted in less than an hour,” Westlake senior Nasir Shakur said in the release. “I think my [Elite Black Men] brothers did an amazing job — working as a whole, working as brothers to successfully plant the trees.”

Charles County Public Schools is partnering with the Resilience Authority, Charles County government, the Maryland Forestry Service, the Student Conservation Association and Maryland's 5 Million Trees initiative to plant and maintain urban tree canopies and pocket forests.

“Pocket forests” are known as areas of fast growing native trees with layered, mix plants mimicking layers of a natural forest.

An additional tree planting is planned by The Resilience Authority to plant an urban tree canopy next spring at Thomas Stone High School.