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Volunteers aid community park



Alex Carrier

Some of the dozens of volunteers who helped plant more than 400 trees and shrubs in Greene County Community Park last Saturday. The tubing protects the young trees from deer while allowing sunlight, water and air to reach the new plants.

Robbi Savage Executive Director Rivanna Conservation Society

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April 3 was a beautiful, sunny day here in Greene County and the day before, Easter found nearly 50 volunteers gathered at Greene County Community Park to plant trees and shrubs on what has come to be known as “the red monster.”

This monster is, of course, that huge expanse of red dirt that slopes up from the soccer field — you know the one that has caused many a mother to sigh in frustration as she tries to get those red stains out of her

athlete's uniform.

But it wasn't just for a clean uniform for those team pictures that these families and friends gathered at the park.

The planting, organized by Greene County (Stephanie Golan and Julius Bates) and facilitated by the Rivanna Conservation Society (Tanner Council and myself) is a part of a comprehensive, watershed wide effort to keep the dirt out of area rivers and streams.

Plantings of this kind form a buffer that will keep dirt on the slope, off of the soccer field and out of the river.

And, over the course of this year, there will be volunteer days to remove "invasive species" and to build a bioswale (rain garden) to reduce stormwater that carries soils to our waterways.

Team leaders included Lori Gore, Frank Wilczek and Jill Meyer, with Norm Slezak, Andrea Wilkerson and Cathy Kloetzli offering their technical and physical support.

The Greene County Lions, Ruritans, Garden Club and Master Naturalists were also there to lend a hand, as were members of the Tree Stewards Association.

According to Golan, the county planner, "We are absolutely delighted by the turn out and we are so grateful for the support of the various organizations who called upon their members to be at the park this past Saturday."

Julius Bates, director of the county department of parks and recreation, added, "We were concerned that since the planting was held the day before Easter that we might have a low turnout, but the community sure came through for us."

As the project facilitator it has been a joy for me to see so many mothers and fathers working hand and shovel to plant and mulch more than 430 trees.

What a treat to see parents engaging their children in the process of caring for the natural environment, while building a sense of commitment to our community.

Phineus Godbold (age 7) summed it up this way: "My dad said that since our family uses this park all the time it is our responsibility to help make it a better place for everyone." (Phineus is one of 6 brothers — Owen, Liam, Cullen, Perrin and Treston — who, with their dad Gene, planted from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

With funding provided by the Virginia Department of Forestry and a watershed-wide grant provided by the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to the Rivanna River Basin Commission, the buffer planting served as the first in a series of projects to improve the stormwater drainage at the Greene County Community Park.

With planning and planting, the "red monster" may forever be banished from the park.