

## Press Releases

### Governor McKee, DEM, Partners Mark Arbor Day in East Providence with Awards, Tree Planting

PROVIDENCE – Governor Dan McKee and the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), in partnership with the Rhode Island Tree Council, National Grid, and the City of East Providence held a special Arbor Day celebration today at Hull Street Park in East Providence. Fifteen evergreen and shade trees were planted at the park to commemorate the day, along with the ceremonial planting of a tulip tree. Governor Dan McKee read a proclamation at the ceremony declaring today the 134th anniversary of Arbor Day in Rhode Island, and students of the Emma G. Whiteknact Elementary School read The Majesty of Trees.

"The simple act of planting a tree helps improve our ability to combat many of the environmental and health challenges we face. To celebrate Arbor Day, I challenge all Rhode Islanders to find the time to do something – big or small – to clean up or beautify our community," said Governor McKee. "All across our state, trees are supporting our quality of life and enhancing our environment for the benefit of Rhode Islanders today and in the years to come."

"Trees do so much for us, and they ask so little in return," said DEM Director Janet Coit. "In addition to improving the quality of our environment and beautifying our neighborhoods, trees play an important role in cooling streets and homes, filtering air, and reducing stormwater pollution. Trees also play an important role in sequestering carbon to slow the rate of climate change. Yet, I think we appreciate them most for the simple pleasures they offer. There are few things more relaxing than sitting beneath a gorgeous shade tree and connecting with nature."

"This was a very special occasion for East Providence," Mayor Bob DaSilva said. "We not only regained our status as a Tree City USA city, but we also celebrated the 134th observance of Rhode Island Arbor Day."

Several municipalities were recognized for their efforts to green local communities as part of the National Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA program. In addition to the host city of East Providence, which receive the Tree City USA Growth Award, awards were presented to Barrington, Bristol, Central Falls, Cranston, Jamestown, Middletown, Narragansett, Newport, Portsmouth, Providence Warren, Warwick, and West Warwick. Johnson & Wales University's Providence Campus and Salve Regina University were recognized for their participation in the Foundation's Tree Campus USA program.

"This is our first Arbor Day event held in East Providence. We are proud to be here and look forward to many more to come in the future," said Doris Alberg, Chair of the Rhode Island Tree Council. "The need to plant trees has never been more urgent. The planet is waiting for them."

Since 1991, the Rhode Island Tree Council has worked cooperatively with DEM and other partners to sustain and improve Rhode Island's urban and community forests. Over the past

two years, DEM has partnered with American Forests to develop and deploy a suite of tools that optimize Rhode Island urban forests for climate and health outcomes through the lens of tree equity. With input from partners including the RI Tree Council, RI Department of Health, City of Providence, Groundwork RI, Providence Neighborhood Tree Planting Program and many others, Rhode Island is the first location in the country to have its own tree equity score analyzer (TESA). TESA is a GIS-based decision- support tool that combines tree cover, demographic, public health and current and projected climate data to visualize where tree planting and management should be prioritized in order to cool neighborhoods, improve air quality and reduce mental stress to promote social equity. This powerful tool also allows users to create their own tree planting scenarios at the neighborhood and parcel level. The resulting impact report quantifies the impact of tree planting in terms of advancing tree equity scores and measuring the amount of carbon stored as well as the stormwater and air quality benefits and energy savings. This critical work is tied to Rhode Island's participation in the US Climate Alliance and Resilient Rhody, the state's first comprehensive climate action strategy and is made possible by a \$650,000 grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

Each year, Arbor Day is celebrated on the last Friday of April to mark the importance of trees to our environment, culture, and economy. The first Arbor Day was celebrated in Nebraska in 1872 with more than one million tree plantings. Rhode Island began celebrating the day in 1887.

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