

Durant community holds tree planting day

By Sofia Reyna

On August 10, 2020, Durant and parts of the Midwest suffered a severe derecho.

In town, we saw a lot of damage including over 25 fallen trees and blocked roads. Even after a year, Durant is still facing challenges because of existing damage received during the derecho. As a result, the city of Durant has decided to plant trees across the town on October 2.

Volunteers and the Durant Tree Board will meet up at 8 a.m. and be divided into four teams that will plant, mulch, and water trees until an estimated finish time of 11 a.m. The Durant Tree Board has received a \$2,000 dollar grant from Trees Forever, a nonprofit charitable organization that cares for the environment, for a five-year plan to

replace the lost trees.

The first place to receive new trees will be our city parks, with 14 new trees being distributed in both parks. These trees will include a variety of different species.

Some Durant students who have volunteered to help in planting trees include Carlie Jo Fusco, Alyssa Skriloff, and Kaetlyn Hansell. Students from Mr. Tim Rouse's shop class will also be helping by digging holes for the trees.

Skriloff remembers when the derecho took place, and how it had personally affected her.

"I remember my parents called us and told us to stay inside because the weather was gonna get bad," said Skriloff. "We used to have a trampoline, and it went two houses down into our neighbor's backyard.

Our neighbors next to us had a trampoline too, and it flipped over into our neighbor's pool behind them."

Skriloff said her desire to help plant the trees is due to her wish to help the environment and community, as well as earn some community service hours as mentioned in school announcements promoting the tree planting.

"With global warming and all that, we should try to help the environment as much as we can," she said.

Skriloff also believes that the planting of these trees can lead to greater changes in aiding our environment.

"It would be nice to have more community service days, planting more trees and plants, and picking up more trash," she stated.

Senior Alyssa Digney also believes that this is a great opportunity for the community to care more about the environment and try to help it.

"We're killing the Earth, and most people don't even care," she said.

Along with this, Digney hopes that she will see more of these changes in the future.

"This is a really good cause, and I hope it continues for a lot longer than just five years," stated Digney.

However, planting trees is just the start in saving the environment.

"I would also like to see recycling being more enforced," said Digney. "We also picked up trash in some areas a few years ago, and I think we should be doing that again."

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She advises the Houks to "enjoy it" and feels that they all are pretty lucky to have their significant others work right across the hall from them.

Since the beginning of the school year, the Houks have been asked many times how it's going to be working with each other.

"We're not sick of each other, and we don't think it will ever get that way," said Mr. Houk.

They always talked about their school days when they worked apart, so they are excited that they now share the same school day and can see each other throughout the day.

"We talk through what improvements or ideas we could try out in our classrooms. It's better now because we are on the same page of what is happening at work," said Mr. Houk.

The Houks moved out to Durant three years ago from Davenport and when the art position came open this summer, the couple moved quickly.

"We immediately jumped on getting everything together in order to apply for this position," said Mrs. Houk, and they both were relieved when they found out that he had gotten the job.

The Houks are also happy to have another married couple who have been working together for years to relate to.



Photo by Dayna Maiers

Mrs. Hailey Houk and Mr. David Houk hold their wedding photo along with Mrs. Abigail Straube and Mr. Matt Straube.

"Knowing that they also have small children like us, it's nice to have the thought in our heads of they know what we're going through too," said Mrs. Houk.



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Durant Hub's mixologist of the month



Sophomore Maddie Utter started working at the Durant Hub in June. Her favorite beverage to make is the Spring Break. The best part about working at the Hub "is learning how to make and try new drinks." Owner Britney Ingles works with her employees to create school-friendly schedules.



Utter

608 Fifth St., Durant, IA
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Liberty Trust & Savings Bank's teacher of the month



Mr. Andy Strunk has been teaching for nine years and feels the students at Durant are hardworking and everyone is friendly. Mr. Strunk said, "I got into teaching and coaching because I like building confidence in students and players and seeing them become successful in whatever they choose to do in their lives."



Strunk

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The school is also no longer tracing positive cases based on directions from the Iowa Department of Public Health.

"The only concern I have is if another student in Randy's class tests positive, and we are not made aware of it," said Mrs. Carpenter.

"It is hard to watch for symptoms, if you are not aware of any exposure and with heading into cold/flu season, it is going to be challenging."

Mrs. Carpenter also said that their household has chosen to get vaccinated and is taking the precautions recommended by the CDC.

Pfizer and Moderna are currently in clinical trials to develop a vaccine that is safe for children to receive.

"I am not concerned that children cannot get vaccinated," Mrs. Carpenter said. "This will become available when the FDA feels it is safe to administer to our littles."

It's not just in the elementary where students are still choosing to wear masks. Sophomore Cayden Eckhardt said that he is choosing to wear the mask although he is vaccinated because he wants to minimize his chances of getting the virus.

"I think my dad had some influence in my decision, but it was mostly my own," he said.

It's not just with students and their families that mask wearing is a hot-button issue. It is also with the teachers and faculty.

One Durant High School teaching couple is facing the uncertainty of raising three children and two foster children in the midst of a pandemic where vaccines are still unavailable for students 12 and under.

Math teacher Mrs. Abigail Straube says she and her husband Mr. Matt Straube, social studies teacher, understand the risks of sending their children to school without masks.

"It's kind of like a faith thing," Mrs. Straube said.

"I'm just hoping and putting my faith in God that if we get it again, or if we get it, hopefully we'll be okay."

Mrs. Straube said that because her children are in so many different activities and are not required to wear masks at those places, that it doesn't make sense to wear them at school.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Straube said that if the school district would have to go back to wearing masks, they would "wear it in a heartbeat."

Spanish teacher Mr. Jeff Trask also made the decision to wear a mask.

"I have two 16-month-olds at home, so it's really to protect my family but also to protect my students," Mr. Trask said.

"You know there are days that I see 80 students a day, and one person can transmit it pretty easily."



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