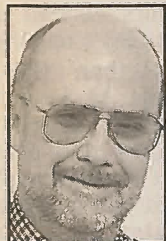


Shades of service

Prospective Eagle Scout organizes planting of 50 trees at Clifty Park



By
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The
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WHEN the ashes, the oaks, the pears and the Kentucky coffees he and his friends planted Saturday reach full growth, Ashish Parekh will be something like 65 years old.

That's a long time to wait — 50 years by the reckoning of city arborist Kris Medic — but every time the Columbus teen-ager walks around the baseball diamonds at Clifty Park he can anticipate the future and know he had a big part in it.

In the meantime, the parents and followers of scores of junior baseball players along with the exercise-minded walkers on the People Trail will have shade, lots of shade — 50 trees worth in what has mostly been an open area across from Columbus East High School.

Clifty is a public park, owned and maintained by the Columbus Parks and Recreation Department. The trees planted Saturday in the east portion of the combination green space-recreation area are the work of the son of Ashok and Ami Parekh.

He not only coordinated the selection and planting of the trees but also fed his co-workers and arranged for a communitywide Arbor Day program April 25.

Not bad, even for an Eagle Scout.

That's what the teen will become upon completion of this particular undertaking, a required element of the process by which he will get his Eagle Scout badge.

Eagle Scout badges are pretty significant for young people and their families, but they're hardly major news.

Ashish made his project newsworthy.

With all but one of the 50 trees planted Saturday, the Columbus East student has moved to the next phase of his project, making people in the community aware of Arbor Day and the April 25 ceremony which will be focused on his project.

That's why he called the newspaper — to arrange for publicity for the 10 a.m. ceremony at which the 50th Clifty Park tree will be planted.

He had even lined up a speaker — Rep. David Yount, R-Columbus — and sponsors to pay for door prizes to be given during the day.

It's the sort of things organizations and clubs do on a regular basis. They create all sorts of committees and parcel out assignments such as publicity, entertainment, speakers, volunteers, etc. to various individuals.

This was all done by a teen-ager.

A lot of community service projects around this town are being done by teen-agers these days. For that matter, a lot are being done by kids in grade school.

Kris Medic, for instance, keeps a wish list of environmental projects for Eagle Scouts who approach her looking for projects they can use to earn their badge.

"Last year one of the Scouts created a nesting area for hawks," she said. "After we finish with the



The Republic photo by Richard Sitter

Ashish Parekh, at left in hat, helps volunteers David Trocki, clockwise from top, Mike Bonifacius, Heather Macy and Russell Campbell plant a tree at Clifty Park. Parekh planned the tree planting for an Eagle Scout project. Volunteers from Columbus East High School Interact club, Boy Scout Troop 559 and friends and neighbors of Parekh assisted.

Preview

WHAT: Celebrate Arbor Day 1998.

WHEN: 10 a.m. April 25.

WHERE: Clifty Park.

SPEAKER: Rep. David Yount, R-Columbus.

PURPOSE: To celebrate Arbor Day with a ceremonial tree planting in the park.

INFORMATION: 342-0035.

Arbor Day program, I'm going to be working with another Scout on a project to put bat houses in Mill Race Park to keep the mosquito problem under control."

In the Bartholomew Consolidated School Corp. elementary schools have a public service element in the curriculum — students adopting a particular project that will benefit the community. Sometimes it's a fund-raising effort for a particular charity or cause, but much more than selling candy or raffle

tickets is involved. The children learn firsthand about the cause they are supporting.

It's a far cry from the make-work projects of earlier generations. I've often suspected that those self-directed enterprises were devised by adult leaders and teachers because if children screwed them up no one else would be the worse for their having tried.

Maybe it's the adults who have grown up. Instead of being viewed as tokens, kids are now being given the opportunity to participate in the adult world.

Granted, just as was the case in Ashish's Arbor Day project, there is adult guidance and advice along the way, but there is also a hands-on involvement in something that will have an effect on others.

Ashish will have been an adult for several years before the results of his project are really clear, but I suspect the wait will still be worth it.

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