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15 Arkansas Playgrounds Selected to Participate in Annual Shade Trees on Playgrounds Program

LITTLE ROCK, AR –The Arkansas Department of Agriculture’s Forestry Division has selected 15 playgrounds at the following schools to participate in the Shade Trees on Playgrounds program (S.T.O.P.):

- Earle Elementary School (Earle)
- McGehee High School (McGehee)
- Holly Harshman Elementary School (Mena)
- Gardner Strong Elementary School (Strong)
- Smackover Preschool (Norphlet)
- William Jefferson Clinton Primary School (Hope)
- Parkway Elementary School (Bryant)
- Oliver Springs Elementary School (Van Buren)
- Prairie Grove Middle School (Prairie Grove)
- Ruth Doyle Middle School (Conway)
- Raymond & Phyllis Simon Middle School (Conway)
- Perryville Elementary School (Perryville)
- Arkansas School for the Blind (Little Rock)
- Blessed Sacrament School (Jonesboro)
- Mountain Home Montessori (Mountain Home)

The Shade Trees on Playgrounds Program (S.T.O.P.) was organized to lower adult skin cancer risk by reducing childhood exposure to direct sunlight where children play, like school playgrounds. Winning schools receive five shade trees, mulch, watering supplies, and planting guidelines after participating in program training.

“The STOP program combines hands-on, outdoor experiences with classroom curriculum about the importance of trees and how to care for trees,” says Urban & Community Forestry Program Coordinator, Kristine Kimbro Thomason. “We hope this program not only improves the health of Arkansas students, but also leaves a lasting impression about the value of forests and how to be good stewards of our natural resources.”

Schools are invited to submit S.T.O.P. applications annually. To qualify, participating schools must lack shade, participate in a virtual S.T.O.P. workshop, agree to use Forestry Division curriculum to emphasize the importance of trees and forestry in Arkansas, hold a tree-planting ceremony with students, and agree to long-term maintenance of the planted shade trees. Forestry Division personnel assist with the transport and planting of the trees. Trees for each campus are chosen by local Forestry Division staff to fit the unique region and conditions of each playground and are purchased from local nurseries and suppliers.

Learn more about the S.T.O.P. program and other Urban & Community Forestry services and programs, at agriculture.arkansas.gov/forestry/urban-community-forestry. With program questions, contact Kristine Kimbro Thomason at 479-228-7929 or kristine.thomason@agriculture.arkansas.gov, or Harold Fisher at 501-580-4054 or harold.fisher@agriculture.arkansas.gov.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. Visit agriculture.arkansas.gov.