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Annual Shade Trees on Playgrounds Program to Provide Added Shade on Local Playground

Highland, AR – Highland Preschool was chosen as one of twelve schools statewide to receive shade trees through the 2021 Shade Trees on Playgrounds (S.T.O.P.) program. The S.T.O.P program was organized in 2004 by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture’s Forestry Division to lower adult skin cancer risk by reducing childhood exposure to direct sunlight where children play, like school playgrounds and open green spaces.

A tree planting ceremony was held at the school on November 16th with 20 attendees, including District Forester Michael Mowery and Urban Forestry District Representative Kenny Smothers, Mayor Russell Truitt of Highland, Sharp County Judge Gene Moore, Highland Fire Chief Kal Dienst, and other local dignitaries. Five trees were planted on the school playground: 4 red maple, 2 tulip poplar, 2 Shumard oak, and 2 lace bark elm.

“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. “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 S.T.O.P. workshop (virtually as needed), agree to use Forestry Division-provided curriculum to emphasize the importance of trees and forestry in Arkansas, hold a tree-planting ceremony, 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](https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/forestry/urban-community-forestry). With program questions, contact Kristine (Krissy) Kimbro at 479-228-7929 or kristine.kimbro@agriculture.arkansas.gov, or Harold Fisher at 501-580-4054 or harold.fisher@agriculture.arkansas.gov.

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