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## Volunteers plant 450 trees

By Jessica J. Burchard  
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**Winchester** — In an effort to reduce pollution in the Abrams and Opequon creeks, residents gathered at Whittier Park Natural Area on Saturday to plant 450 trees.



The trees — persimmon, black walnut, and white oak — are expected to help with runoff and other problems in the local bodies of water. They were planted in long rows along the stream flowing through the nature area.

“This is a follow-up to the cleanup plans for Abrams and Opequon creeks,” said Jim Lawrence, project coordinator for Opequon Water Shed Inc. “In terms of water quality, the trees will help with the overflow. They’ll take in nutrients and flows that come through.”

Both creeks were found to have high levels of pollution that were detrimental to wildlife.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency, in conjunction with several state agencies, mandated a cleanup plan be formed and implemented.

Tara Sieber, a water quality specialist with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, explained how the trees will help in the long-term.

“In the next five to 10 years, the trees will be able to spread their root systems out and when they reach maturity — in another 20 years — they’ll be able to filter more,” Sieber said. “It’s also a great way to beautify the community.”

The community tree planting was organized through a collaboration of the Opequon Water Shed Inc., the state DEQ, the Virginia Cooperative Extension Office — which provided the trees — and other groups.



Aaron Rose, 7 (from left), Jay Scully, 2, and John Scully plant a tree along the Town Run. About 65 volunteers planted 450 trees to help reduce pollution in the Abrams and Opequon creeks.

*(Photo by Ginger Perry)*



Although the government agencies provided supplies for the planting, the community support made it a success.

“We’ve had such a great outpouring of support from the community with varying age ranges,” Sieber said. “We’re just very excited to attract this much local support.”

More than 100 community members pitched in to assist with the planting. Many were members of local gardening clubs, but others were younger and had several reasons for helping.

“It’s fun and it helps the environment,” Allen Mentoya, a sophomore at Handley High School, said. “I’ve already planted six trees and I hope to do more.”

Allen, 16, participated in the activity to help the community and bolster his science grade. Some sophomore science class students from Handley received extra credit for volunteering.

“I had a little bit of an idea about planting trees,” he said as he began to shovel dirt around a sapling. “But didn’t know much about it.”

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