

Students put down local roots

By Katina A. Gaudet
Staff Writer

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Larose-Cut Off Junior High
ninth-grader Ben Edwards

ior at Central Lafourche. Both the outings and the work leading up to it are things the students involved seem to enjoy. "It's fun, and it helps just to help," said Ben Edwards, 15, a ninth-grader at Larose-Cut Off Junior High.

Though the program originated in the parish, the excursion to the levee was the first planting for parish students.

In late October, however, more than 20 students from Grace King and West Jefferson high schools went to the levee to plant black mangrove near the water's edge and wax myrtle closer to the levee apron.

The black mangrove those students planted seem to be doing well, organizers say, but the wax myrtle is not, possibly the result of saltwater intrusion into the area.

Each school's nursery produced different results, and students know they are often dealing with factors beyond their control when trying to grow the native plants.

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Staff photo by Katina A. Gaudet

Patrice Jenkins, 18, a junior at South Lafourche High School, plants black mangrove seedlings near the edge of a hurricane protection levee in Galliano. Students from area junior and senior high schools planted native grass Wednesday to help protect the bottom of the levee from erosion.

Larose-Cut Off Junior High
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Central Lafourche high schools.

Students from nine schools throughout the Barataria and Terrebonne basins participate, planting seeds and then nursing the seedlings of native plants – mostly black mangrove and wax myrtle – to use in small-scale restoration efforts like the levee reinforcement.

If their seedlings do well, students take them out in the marsh or, in this case, out to the levee to plant.

The threat of a hurricane "taking out" parts of the parish was on the minds of some students while they worked to protect the levee.

"We're trying to save this for years later whenever we get a big hurricane, so we don't have to see the Gulf in Lockport," said Jay Guidroz, 16, a jun-

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"Some of our plants had died because we had a hard frost," said Sarah Griffin, 16, a junior at Central Lafourche. "Most lived, and we put them in the green house, and they're doing really well now. We brought them out here to plant."

Teachers also like the program because it gives their students a mean-

ingful and educational activity.

"They enjoy growing the mangrove seeds, and they really did a good job," said Eric Zak, an agriculture teacher at South Lafourche High School of his students' efforts. South Lafourche students grew more than 200 black mangrove seedlings last year.

For more than a year, they, like their senior high counterparts, have watered and watched as their seeds have grown to seedlings, and for most, both the work and its aim have been

worthwhile. "It's very good for the young kids to get involved with. It's a good program," said Tony Guilbeau, 18, a senior at South Lafourche. "It's not much hard work, but it does take some dedication, and it teaches you responsibility."

"It takes some work, but it's worth it," said Travis Crowell, 17, a senior at South Lafourche.

Katina A. Gaudet can be reached at 448-7614 or by e-mail at katina.gaudet@dailycomet.com.