A "Can Do" Attitude
LSU Coastal Roots Program Working with Grade Schools to Help Prevent Wetland Erosion

With scientists predicting that New Orleans could be a coastal city in 10 years or less, the LSU Coastal Roots Program is working with schools in a grassroots effort to restore the wetlands, can by can, tree by tree.

On Friday, March 16, the LSU Coastal Roots Program is leading approximately 100 students from Albert Cammon Middle School in St. Rose, La., from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. to plant nearly 1,000 swamp red maple and bald cypress seeds in their brand new can yard.

A can yard is an area where plants are raised until they are large enough to be moved to their final planting location. Albert Cammon is the second of three middle schools in St. Charles Parish that are installing new can yards this year. R.K. Smith Middle in Luling installed their can yard in March and J.B. Martin Middle in Paradis will be installing theirs in the near future.

These schools are beneficiaries of a service-learning grant written by Barry Guillot, a teacher at Harry Hurst Middle in Destrehan in St. Charles Parish, whose students have been participating in the
Coastal Roots Program since 2003. St. Charles is the only parish that has all of its middle schools participating in the program. There are currently 17 schools in 10 parishes participating in the LSU Coastal Roots Program.

Students will watch over their wetland tree seedlings until late next fall, when the seedlings are between 9 and 12 inches tall. At that time, the students will transplant half of them to Bayou Segnette State Park, which received significant damage from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. The remaining half of their seedlings will be repotted into one-gallon containers in the can yard, where they will grow larger and stronger before their eventual move to the state park the following year. Students will keep the production cycle going by planting a new set of 1,000 seedlings the following spring.

"It is a wonderful opportunity to have a joint cooperative endeavor with local schools for projects we are already working on in our parks and to get students actively involved in restoring Louisiana's coasts and marshes," said Raymond Berthelot, chief of interpretive services at the Louisiana Office of State Parks.

The LSU Coastal Roots Program is an environmental stewardship program devoted to advocating community partnerships and self-sustaining environmental coastal restoration projects.

"The kids are learning how to take care of something that will make a difference in the environment," said Pam Blanchard, director of the LSU Coastal Roots Program. "We believe that this project is a wonderful launching point for lessons to teach the kids about why we're losing our wetlands and why environmental stewardship is so important. It's a great vehicle to teach both life and earth science concepts as well as provide students a hands-on stewardship project that makes the science content interesting, relevant, and memorable."

**Info?**

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