



Jonathan Menard/Herald-Guide
Albert Cammon students Christina Arrechavala and Jasmine Tassara plant a cypress tree along a nature trail in Bayou Segnette State Park.

Albert Cammon students use own trees to replenish park

500 cypress and maple trees grown at campus nursery

BY JONATHAN MENARD

Editor
jonathamm@heraldguide.com

Students from Albert Cammon Middle School did their part to help the Bayou Segnette State Park recover from Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, planting close to 500 trees along a mile-long nature trail.

Throughout the past year, the students have raised the trees used in the restoration project in their school's on-campus can yard. A can yard is an area where the future trees are raised until they are large enough to be moved to their final planting location. The trees that were planted by this year's seventh grade class were actually grown by last year's class. This year's seventh graders will begin growing a new group of trees in March.

Eighty-four students took part in the planting. The trees were planted as part of LSU's Coastal Roots Program, which began in 2000, but saw increased interest after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The program provides an active learning situation in which students can explore strategies for sustaining coastal ecosystems. The program does this through conducting an on-going school-based nursery program, where students grow native plants and learn about habitat restoration by venturing out and planting the trees.

Bayou Segnette was chosen this year because the state park has lost 90 percent of its mature trees due to hurricanes over the past several years.

"Our nature trail was hit particularly hard by the past two hurricanes and we have just finished clearing out the area," Denise McKinney, interpretive ranger at Bayou Segnette State Park, said.



Jonathan Menard/Herald-Guide
Albert Cammon teacher Ann Bourgeois digs in and helps put the finishing touches on a planting.

"By planting these new, young trees, they can grab onto the land and provide shade. This also serves as an outdoor classroom for these students and they get to learn a lot about this habitat and the importance of its restoration."

Dr. Pam Blanchard, the Coastal Roots coordinator, helped create the Coastal Roots Program and she was very impressed with Albert Cammon.

"The students and the teachers have done a great job and the school has been very organized," she said. "Actually, they are one of the most organized schools we have dealt with. The school's irrigation system is fantastic and this year most of the trees were around two feet, which is really something."

Blanchard says that the success of the program comes down to the teachers at each of the participating schools around the state.

"I don't tell the teachers how to implement the program into their curriculum, that's something they do on their own," she said. "The teachers really have to be willing to take part in this project and make it a success."

To Albert Cammon teacher Ann Bourgeois, the tree planting is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for the students.

"They aren't always excited to come out here at first, but once they do, they realize they are really making a difference," she said. "Many of these students, along with students everywhere in the parish, have never even been out here before. This gets them out of their comfort zone and really opens up their eyes, and the eyes of their parents, to how important this is."