



Community Outreach

R.K. Smith Middle School in Luling to Participate in Planting for LSU's Coastal Roots Program

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BATON ROUGE – On Wednesday, Jan. 6, at 10 a.m., students from R.K. Smith Middle School in Luling will be planting trees at Bayou Segnette State Park to participate in a coastal restoration planting with the LSU Coastal Roots Program.

Having grown southern bald cypress trees in their school's can yard under the guidance of LSU College of Education faculty, the students will transplant the seedlings to the new site to provide food and habitat for the site's animals, as well as to provide a way to stabilize the soil there. Plants grown by the students in their school-based nurseries are chosen by the restoration site manager based on particular location's needs.

"We are selectively having the children plant their trees where they would have the best chance for survival in the long run," said Bayou Segnette Interpretive Ranger Denise McKinney. "We depend on wetlands areas to provide us with hurricane and flood protection by providing wind relief and flood water progression."

The LSU Coastal Roots Program provides an active learning situation in which students can explore strategies for sustaining coastal ecosystems and develop an attitude of stewardship toward natural resources. The program does this through conducting an on-going school-based nursery program growing native plants and involving students in a hands-on habitat restoration planting. In addition, the program provides teachers and students with information on issues such as ecological stewardship, wetlands functions and values, wetland functions and values, habitat restoration and conservation and basic geoscience and horticultural skills.

"Students participating in the LSU Coastal Roots Program are learning to be stewards of our natural resources," said Pam Blanchard, director of the Coastal Roots program and LSU College of Education assistant professor. "This means both educating ourselves about critical issues so we can make good decisions for our families and taking action to nurture the environment that nurtures us."

The LSU Coastal Roots Program is an initiative of the LSU College of Education Department of Educational Theory, Policy and Practice. The program now includes approximately 40 schools in 18 parishes throughout southern Louisiana. Since the plantings began in 2001, 3,600 students have transplanted more than 29,000 school-grown restoration plants on 90 restoration trips across south Louisiana.

"The Coastal Roots program is a great example of our commitment to innovative, research-based outreach programs that make a difference in the lives of kids while helping all Louisiana residents," said Jayne Fleener, dean of the College of Education. "We are proud to provide students the opportunities to become stewards of the ecological future of Louisiana and to provide teachers with the opportunities to enrich their science lessons with hands-on, real-life activities."