

News Release

Oakland County Board distributes thousands of oak seedlings in honor of bicentennial celebration

May 21, 2020, OAKLAND COUNTY, MI. – In celebration of Oakland County’s bicentennial in 2020, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners, with the support of the County Executive, distributed 5,000 oak tree seedlings to more than 50 community partners. Recipients, including cities, villages and school districts, received the seedlings on May 20 and 21.

Oak trees are intertwined with the county’s history and provide great ecological benefits for the region. They were among the first signs of Oakland County’s rich natural resources, indicating to surveyors looking for farmable land that water was present. Although there is no official account, it is probable that the county’s name was also influenced by the abundance of oak trees, and according to historical records, the county’s oak tree seal was inspired by a white oak that was photographed by Darwin Catlin in 1959.

“The mighty oak tree is symbolic of Oakland County and all it has to offer,” Commissioner **Gwen Markham** (D-Novi), who introduced this project to the board in late 2019, said. “Native to this area, oak trees are part of our home and have been here for thousands of years. We celebrate our bicentennial by planting 5,000 oak trees to sustain our home for future generations to enjoy.”

The Board of Commissioners worked with the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Department, Oakland Schools and ReLeaf Michigan, the only statewide non-profit tree planting organization, to execute this innovative project. Through this partnership, the project planning team developed education opportunities and materials to ensure the seedlings are planted and maintained properly.

“It truly has been a pleasure to collaborate on a project such as this,” Melinda Jones, executive director for ReLeaf Michigan, said. “It was a very proactive step on behalf of the county. Currently, Michigan is losing 4,000 acres of urban canopy on a yearly basis, and this project is an absolutely amazing positive step forward.”

Over their lifetime, the trees will provide food and shelter for wildlife, promote pollinators, cast shade to cool the ground, filter air with purifying foliage, prevent soil erosion and improve water quality.

The seedlings will be placed in areas throughout the county. Cities and townships may choose to plant them on municipal properties or safely distribute them to residents and community organizations.

For more information about the Board of Commissioners, please visit www.oakgov.com/boc or call 248-858-0100.

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