

It Starts with an Acorn



CHRIS MONCUS PHOTOGRAPHY



People have been celebrating the significance of trees for centuries. The first documented arbor plantation festival was held in the Spanish village of Mondoñedo in 1594. The site marked with a granite and bronze plate commemorating the event is currently known as Alameda de los Remedios and is still planted with lime and horse chestnut trees. But it was a Spanish priest,

don Ramón Vacas Roxo, in Villa Nueva de la Sierra, who launched the first modern Arbor Day with the enthusiastic support of the population in 1805. "Convinced of the importance of trees for health, hygiene, decoration, nature, environment and customs, he decided to plant trees and give a festive air." The festival began with the ringing of bells, and following Mass, the priest, other clergy members, teachers and nearby neighbors, planted a poplar as the very

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.” – The Lorax, Dr. Seuss



first tree. Three days of celebration followed with feasting, dancing, and more tree plantations. Don Ramón also drafted a manifesto in praise of trees that he sent to neighboring towns to spread the love and respect for nature and encouraging them to plant trees as well.

It took nearly 70 years before the first Arbor Day took place in the United States. The first recognized American Arbor Day originated in

Nebraska City, Nebraska by J. Sterling Morton, and was held on April 10, 1872. On that day, more than one million trees were planted in Nebraska! It remains as a civil holiday in Nebraska, and today National Arbor Day is celebrated in all 50 states on the last Friday in April. Don Ramón would be proud that his love and respect for trees spread so far and wide, but surely he could not have imagined that more than two centuries after his festival,

children and adults would continue to come together to cherish what has been planted and to act as stewards for future generations.

Luckily, Sandy Turbidy is a person who cares deeply. The GIFT tree foundation (*continues*)

OPPOSITE PAGE: The Ross Family. (Photo by Chris Monicus Photography). **THIS PAGE:** GIFT's first tree planting with Founding Board members Jeffrey Johns, Kay Cantrell, Joy Elliott, Jan Lemasters, Sandy Turbidy, Miriam Lancaster and Nan Marie O'Hara.

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is the embodiment of Sandy's longstanding dream. Established in November 2015, GIFT is a component fund of the Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation with a mission to provide for the preservation of the tree canopy in Glynn County through the planting and replacement of trees, education, and advocacy. Sandy is joined by Joy Elliot, Jan Lemas-

scape. Local tourism promoters, county officials and realtors actively promote the tree canopy as one of the key defining characteristic of St. Simons Island and Glynn County. Tourists, travel agents, national and international media praise the beauty of the tree canopy and assume – falsely – that we have deliberately protected this valuable and unique

most precious natural resource: our tree canopy. And that is truly a gift to the community.”

GIFT held an inaugural celebration of Georgia Arbor Week February 10-19th with numerous activities around the Golden Isles. They began their week of celebration with a free tree pruning workshop at University of



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Rev. Dave Hanson taking the measurements of the largest live oak at Fort Frederica; 3rd graders at St. Simons Elementary School participate with GIFT on how to care for their trees, and students were able to take a tree home to plant (Photo by Staci Bennett.); Coastal Greenery has donated GIFT trees for planting. Pictured here is GIFT advisory board member and Coastal Greenery owner Jeffrey Johns (third from left), with Don Locklin, Chuck Ferrell and Troy Anderson; Kay Cantrell reading *The Lorax* to her students at St. Simons Elementary.

ters, Kay Cantrell, Nan Marie O'Hara, Miriam Lancaster, and Jeffrey Johns, and they make up the Golden Isles Fund for Trees (GIFT) advisory board members.

Their mission is based on a basic understanding that the importance of protecting the local tree canopy is indisputable. It is one of the predominant natural features of the Golden Isles land-

natural resource. While beaches and marshes are protected by state and federal law and regulation, the tree canopy can only be protected and preserved by local action.

Miriam Lancaster explains, “GIFT endeavors to be the positive force that will educate and advocate for the protection and continued health of our county's

Georgia EcoScapes in Brunswick, presented by Jerry Holcombe, ISA Certified Arborist, and Mark McClellan, Specialist Forester, Georgia Forestry Commission. Attendees learned when and how to prune trees, and more about plans to preserve the county's tree canopy. GIFT then met an enthusiastic group of about 75 students at St. Simons Elementary School to plant seedlings (*continues*)

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provided by Jeffrey John's business, Coastal Greenery. The following day, they continued the seedling program at Burroughs-Mollette Elementary School in Brunswick with 100 students. All of these students learned about the importance of trees to our ecosystem and the proper planting and care of their seedlings.

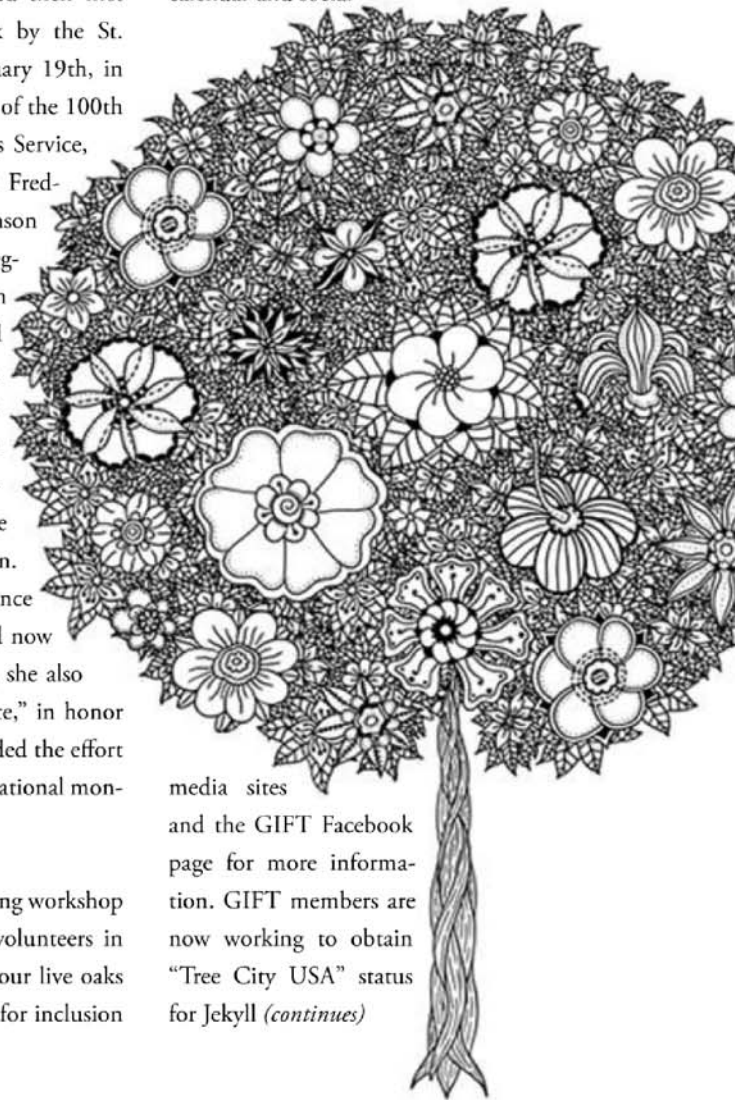
A wonderful way of illustrating the importance of trees to the students was sharing Dr. Seuss' cautionary tale about conservation. Kay Cantrell said, "Reading *The Lorax* to a spell-bound group of third graders at St. Simons Elementary and Burroughs-Mollette and talking about many of the great assets trees are to all of us, made this Arbor Day the best ever. They will have a memory to last for years of planting and taking home their own tree to watch grow. Everyone had fun!"

On February 17th, GIFT planted their first tree, a live oak, in Postell Park by the St. Simons Island Casino. On February 19th, in conjunction with the observation of the 100th anniversary of the National Parks Service, GIFT hosted a program at Fort Frederica presented by Rev. Dave Hanson about tree measurement and registration. Rev. Hanson has been measuring and registering local live oak trees for several years. He measured one of the largest live oaks at the Fort in order to have it registered in the Live Oak Society tree registry maintained by the Louisiana Garden Club Federation. The tree was 22'1" in circumference and had a canopy of 132'3". And now that we know her measurements, she also has a name: "Margaret Davis Cate," in honor of the local woman who spearheaded the effort to have Fort Frederica declared a national monument in the 1940s.

In March, they held a tree measuring workshop at Fort Frederica to train more volunteers in proper measuring techniques for our live oaks so additional trees will be eligible for inclusion

in the Live Oak Society Registry of the Louisiana Garden Club Federation. The Live Oak Society promotes the culture, distribution, preservation and appreciation of the live oak tree. The Society began with 43 members and now boasts 7,960 members in 14 states. Georgia currently has 52 registered live oaks with the Live Oak Society and 27 of them are over 100 years old.

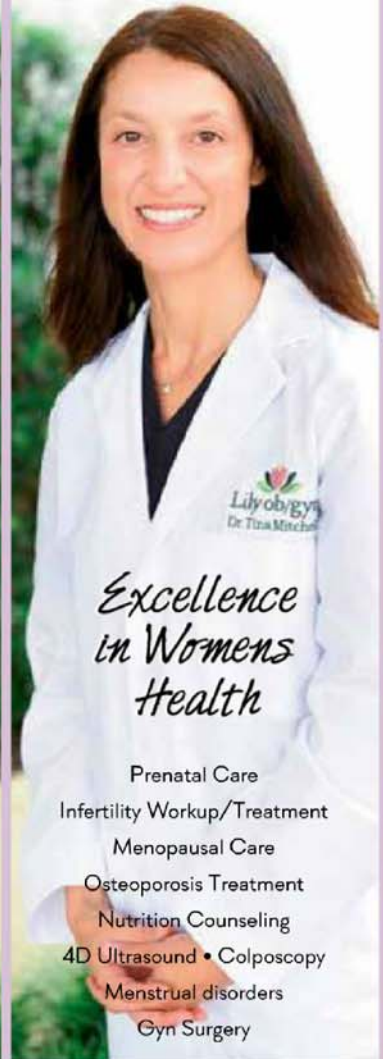
These workshops, school visits, and tree plantings were just the beginning of GIFT's activities in the community. Their goal is to be the premier resource for homebuilders, county staff, tree owners, tree huggers, and anyone interested in the preservation and enhancement of our tree canopy throughout Glynn County. GIFT will be hosting events in Brunswick in late April in observance of National Arbor Day, so keep your eye on the *Elegant Island Living* calendar and social



media sites and the GIFT Facebook page for more information. GIFT members are now working to obtain "Tree City USA" status for Jekyll (*continues*)



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Island, St Simons Island and Brunswick. The Tree City USA program has been greening up cities and towns across America since 1976. It is a nationwide movement that provides the framework necessary for communities to manage and expand their public trees. More than 3,400 communities have made the commitment to becoming a Tree City USA. To qualify as a Tree City USA community, you must meet four standards established by the Arbor Day Foundation and the National Association of State Foresters.

Join GIFT's effort to preserve our tree canopy and raise awareness of the importance of trees in our community by becoming a friend of GIFT and emailing your interest to goldenislesfundfortrees@gmail.com and/or by making a tax-deductible donation to GIFT at Coastalgeorgiafoundation.org and clicking on GIFT. You can also help by participating in GIFT activities or observing Arbor Day in your own way.

MADE IN THE SHADE

Trees positively affect us, our communities, and our environment in so many ways – including some which might be unexpected! Here are some interesting tree facts from the National Arbor Day Foundation:

They help clean the air by removing approximately 1/3 of fossil fuel emissions. They improve air quality and human health by removing pollution from the atmosphere. Roadside trees even reduce nearby indoor air pollution by more than 50%. By absorbing carbon dioxide, removing and storing the carbon, while releasing the oxygen back into the air, trees additionally help reduce the effects of climate change.

They provide us with oxygen. Did you know one large tree can provide a whole day's supply of oxygen for up to four people?! More than 20% of

the world's oxygen is produced in the Amazon Rainforest.

They help clean our drinking water. Forested watersheds provide quality drinking water to more than 180 million Americans, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

Trees also contribute to our emotional wellbeing. Office workers with a view of trees report significantly less stress and more satisfaction. Trees actually save lives! A study of 10 cities has indicated that community forests save an average of one life each year. In NYC, it's estimated that trees save a much higher eight lives per year.

They provide cooling by lowering surface and air temperatures by providing shade and releasing water vapor into the air, this has the additional benefit of helping us save energy. Trees properly placed around buildings can reduce energy consumption for heating and cooling by up to 25%. The U.S. Department of Energy predicts that the proper placement of only three trees can save an average household between \$100-250 in energy costs per year. Trees also increase property values, help lower crime rates, and provide essential habitats for wildlife.

For tips on choosing the perfect tree for your yard, planting and care, as well as resources for tree identification, and preservation programs, visit arborday.org/trees.

This Arbor Day, plant a tree to commemorate a loved one. It will serve as a living monument for decades, and likely centuries, to come.

