



Blue Ridge Parkway News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Volunteers Improve the Blue Ridge Parkway 500 Seedlings Planted Near Roanoke

(Roanoke, VA) – As urban sprawl threatens the Blue Ridge Parkway’s 1,228 views, nearly 150 supporters of America’s most visited National Park Service site decided to do something about it. FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway, in conjunction with the Roanoke Kiwanis Club and other community-based organizations, recently spent three hours planting hardwood and pine seedlings on the parkway. When fully grown, the 500 trees will shield the view of homes now visible from the parkway.


The day began with volunteers arriving by bus at the site, registering, and sharing conversation as they waited to begin. Bob Boeren, a supervisor with the Virginia Department of Forestry, was on hand to instruct volunteers on how to plant the seedlings to ensure survival. Once he was finished, the volunteers went to work.

Although the volunteers ranged in age from two months to 84 years old, they all had a common interest – their love for the Blue Ridge Parkway and its views.

“We’re all very blessed to have this ribbon-like park going through our land,” said David Bowers, mayor of Roanoke and member of the local Kiwanis club. He was very impressed at the number of youth onsite for the planting.

“The youth here will someday be able to drive this road and say, ‘I put a tree there,’” Bowers said.

In support of the Parkway’s Youth Volunteer-In Parks program, the FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway tried to involve as many youth as they could with the event. As Bowers explains, it is not only a good thing to do; it is the responsibility of all who enjoy the resource to involve their youth: “It’s important for us, as stewards, to show these (youth) how to care for the land.”



“The viewshed experience provides adults and children/youth the opportunity to make a difference by planting the seedlings and trees that buffer the encroachment of both residential and commercial development along the Blue Ridge Parkway,” explained Susan Mills, executive director of FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway. FRIEND is a non-profit organization tasked with supporting the parkway through volunteer, educational, and fundraising efforts. She added, “being part of solving an issue of encroachment makes the community feel involved and increases their sense of making a difference for their beloved Blue Ridge Parkway.”

The sun shined the whole morning on the volunteers as they gently placed the seedlings in the holes and added soil and water. Trees were not the only thing that benefitted from the care of the volunteers – the parkway and the Roanoke area were impacted as well.

“Each planting brings a community together,” explained Mills. She continued, “In addition to encouraging a community to work together, the viewshed plantings provide an opportunity for children and youth to leave their computer games and televisions behind and experience activities in the outdoors. As a result, families, community groups, scout troops and individuals call a year in advance wanting to know when the next tree planting will take place . . . volunteering is the perfect conduit to helping an individual feel they are making a difference.”

For more information about volunteering for the Blue Ridge Parkway, contact Park Ranger Shawn Rhodes, Volunteer Coordinator, at (828) 271-4779 x242, or shawn_rhodes@nps.gov.



Roanoke, VA – Bob Boeren, a supervisor with Virginia’s Department of Forestry, instructed more than 100 volunteers on the proper method for planting 500 seedlings. The March 20th tree planting will eventually shield the view of homes cropping up on the edges of the parkway in the Roanoke valley. (Photo by Park Ranger Shawn Rhodes)

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Roanoke, VA – Josephine Eaton may be small, but she and her father, Robert, know the big value of planting trees. Three year-old Eaton joined more than 65 youth and 77 adult volunteers on March 20 to plant trees on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The 500 seedlings will eventually shield the view of homes cropping up around the edges of the parkway in the Roanoke valley. (Photo by Park Ranger Shawn Rhodes)

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Roanoke, VA – Nearly 150 adult and youth volunteers turned out to support the Blue Ridge Parkway March 20. Five hundred hardwood and pine seedlings were planted near mile marker 104 to shield the view of the urban sprawl cropping up on the Parkway near Roanoke. (Photo by Park Ranger Shawn Rhodes)

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