

Social Science Club Project

BC Trees Project Pays Back Mother Nature

Bainbridge College's Student Wellness Center under construction will be a very welcome addition to the college and community when it opens in the fall 2011. But construction for the 77,000-square-foot facility required removing several dozen pine trees from the lovely "central park" that is the geographic hub of the main campus for the college, whose logo includes pine trees and an oak.

That loss to nature concerned Associate Professor of Political Science Dr. John Vanzo, who sponsors the Social Science Club. Together he and the students developed a project to "pay back Mother Nature" to ensure there would be



Bainbridge College Social Science Club members are ready to plant the first seedling for their BC Trees Project. Left to right are Anthony Yates of Brinson, Kacie Gordon of Bainbridge, Sarah Wells of Climax, and Carol Register of Bainbridge.

Photo By Club Advisor Dr. John Vanzo.

no net loss to the area's natural habitat. Called the "BC Trees Project," the club worked out a plan to plant new trees to replace those removed for the new facility.

"We got the immediate and strong support of Dr. Tom Wilkerson, our college president," Vanzo said. "But there were a number of technical details that ended up being a lot more challenging than we thought."

The first problem was cost. In an era of tight budgets, it was extremely difficult to find funds to pay commercial nursery prices. The solution was found with Georgia Forestry Commission's seedling program that provides young trees to the public for the purposes of reforestation, beautification, and restoration of wildlife habitat.

As Anthony Yates holds the seedling steady, fellow Social Science Club members dig in to plant the first seedling for their BC Trees Project. With Yates are Kacie Gordon, Sarah Wells, and Carol Register.

Photo By Club Advisor Dr. John Vanzo.



The Commission's Flint River Nursery near Byromville grows an incredible 15 million-20 million tree seedlings annually. Predominantly pines and hardwoods, seedlings are offered to the public at very low prices.

Another problem was space. There simply wasn't enough empty acreage on campus to replace all the felled trees. Matt Roach, a state forester in the Forestry Commission's Camilla office, spent an afternoon on campus assessing which tree species were suitable for which planting areas.

He concluded that, rather than replacing the lost pines one-for-one, the best strategy would be to plant fewer trees of specific varieties that would enhance the area's food value to wildlife.

With grounds keeping help from BC Plant Operations Director Leonard Dean and his team, the students planted dozens of seedlings in the nature trail area and campus periphery. Seedlings included white oak, bald cyprus, wild plum, persimmon, crab apple and date palms. In time, the trees will provide a rich bounty of food to wildlife.

"Back in the old days, the woods used to be filled with fox squirrels, deer, and wild turkeys," Dean said. "Then all the development in the area chased them away. My crew and I are happy to do anything we can to repay this debt we owe to Mother Nature."

Students who participated in the planting project not only have the personal satisfaction of having helped restore the local environment but also became eligible to attend a Social Science Club field trip to Providence Canyon later in the semester.

"It's really a win-win situation for everyone involved," Vanzo said. "The Bainbridge College campus is beautified, wildlife gets nourished, and students learn a valuable lesson in community service."

The 18-member Social Science Club promotes awareness, active interest and personal involvement of students in all areas of social science, including sociology, psychology, economics, and human geography.