

Planting Roots in Our Communities



Hannah McAvoy and Jessica Ullom next to one of the trees they planted.

For the second year in a row, a group of Range employees spent the day working together to plant trees at a community park. For the event's coordinators, Hannah McAvoy and Nate Smiell, this tree planting was more than just another volunteer day. It was something they had been thoughtfully planning since July in hopes of making a lasting impact on the Independence Township Community Park.

The day resulted in the planting and securing of 16 trees of different varieties including two Sycamores, two Autumn Blaze Maples, two Crimson King Maples, two Flowering Cherries, three Canada Red Cherries and five Sunset Maples. Each variety had a specific purpose in the park, with some examples being the large Sycamores intended to help stabilize the canoe launch area, or the Flowering Cherries which help absorb excess water in low-lying areas.

A lot of scheduling, planning, and worrying about the “what ifs” went on before that first tree was planted,” said Smiell. “Hannah and I started the initial planning process months beforehand.”

The idea was suggested to Hannah and Nate by former Range Vice President of Environmental Compliance, Mike Sherman, who had planned and executed similar successful ventures in the Harrisburg area.

“It was almost a no brainer since Range has leases with several landowners who run tree farms,” said Smiell.

Before the first event last year, the two sat down to figure out what townships they should plant the trees in based on where Range was operating most heavily. In 2018, Range chose Hanover Township Park in Washington County, and Independence Township Park in Beaver County this year. They also decided to use trees from Star Lake Nursery which is owned and operated by Ron Inches, a lease holder with Range.

“We really ramped up our activities in Independence Township this year, so we wanted to show our commitment to maintaining and improving that operating area,” said McAvoy.

White Line Construction, a contractor that works with Range’s Water Operations group, volunteered their time and assistance to help make the tree planting process much quicker and easier. Hannah and Nate reached out to Brad, Jason and Josh White, the three brothers that own the company, because of their roles as conservationists and avid volunteers in the community.



Volunteers work together to get one of the trees into the hole they dug.

“This year’s event has definitely improved from last year, since we were able to organize it in a better way,” said McAvoy. “We didn’t know what to expect the first year, but this time the help from White Line Construction and the use of their auger was a huge help.”

Range holds other conservation events like stream clean-ups, but over time the streams and waterways eventually become littered with trash again. The tree planting event is different because it provides a permanent improvement to the environment. The plan to is to hold the event in different parks and townships each year.

“Myself and others get great satisfaction in providing a tangible change and improvement to these municipal parks who may not have the extra funds for such projects,” said Smiell. “It’s a great opportunity for our department to break free from the day to day routine and have some fun while supporting a great cause.”

Volunteers began arriving at Independence Township Community Park around 8 a.m. and got to work right away. There was a small hiccup at the beginning of the day, when an issue with the auger required volunteers to dig the first few holes by hand. However, before noon the auger was fixed and volunteers were planting, mulching and staking the trees like a well-oiled machine.

“I am certain that this is one of the most impactful community outreach events we stay involved with here at Range,” said Ian Haley, a volunteer who has been involved over the past two years. “The annual tree planting emphasizes our passion for the environment and has a lasting effect in the communities where we operate.”

The annual tree planting will continue to be a part of Range’s conservation efforts for many years to come. Both Hannah and Nate intend to continue their roles in planning and hope that the event will keep growing and improving with time. Thanks to the coordinators and volunteers, Range is setting strong roots in the communities where we live and operate.

To learn more about Range's commitment improving the environment and community, check out our [2018 Corporate Sustainability Report](#).

