

Longleaf pines planted on tribal grounds
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COURTLAND

Beginning late morning of Dec. 30, a brief ceremony commemorated the impending planting of thousands of longleaf pine saplings. Both were done on tribal land belong to the Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indians, and four of its members led in the dedication.

Chief Walt "Red Hawk" Brown, Vice Chief Ellis Wright, and tribal members Mary Wilkerson and Beverly El, also a board member, led that ceremony.

The planting comes nearly a month after the state's Department of Conservation and Recreation did a controlled burn of 175 acres of land in the area, just south of U.S. Route 58 (Southampton Parkway) near the highway's intersection with Route 58 business (Camp Parkway.)

Burning cleared the area of debris left from the harvesting for timber a couple of years ago, and makes it suitable for planting the longleaf pines. All that has been part of the years-long mission by the DCR and Virginia Dept. of Forestry, among other state agencies, to restore longleaf populations in the Western Tidewater area.

Before settlers came from Europe, long leaf pines could be found growing on a million acres in the southeastern United States. But as the population grew, the acreage only decreased because people cut down the trees for multiple purposes such as timber for building houses and ships. Gum turpentine could be made from the resin, and the needles could be made into mulch.

Darren Loomis, the southeast region steward for the National Heritage division of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, said that by the year 2000, there were 300 left. Brown said later that at the completion of planting, there will be a total of 96,000 longleaf pines growing on the tribal land.

Previously, 25,600 were put into approximately 63 other acres.

Also present at the ceremony was Rebecca Wilson, DCR regional supervisor, longleaf pine restoration specialist and Eastern fire manager. She said another burning will take place in a year and thereafter one to two years depending on the size of the plants.

The Cheroenhaka tract, as she called it, is part of the DCR's Recreation's Cypress Bridge Swamp Natural Area Preserve, which is managed by the Division of Natural Heritage in cooperation with the tribe.

Other locations for such nurseries are in the South Quay area of Suffolk; Zuni and the Chubb Sand Hill in Sussex County.

Wilson and Loomis stressed that the burnings are part of the adaptation process.

"It's all about competition," they said. "Otherwise, loblolly pine would take over."

She said that longleaf pines, which grow from the tops of their heads, will begin to reproduce cones a little in their 20s, and will be considered mature in 80 to 100 years. They could live up to 400 years.

Boykins residents clean up
Effort yields over 180 full bags of trash
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BOYKINS

Forty-one people, adults and children alike, came together on an overcast Saturday morning to clean three littered roadsides in Boykins. Together, they collected 186 bags filled with the trash collected during the 3-1/2 hours devoted to the effort.

The task was coordinated by the GFWC Tarrara Woman's Club, which focuses on conservation as one of its major projects. Laurel Livingston, club president, said the cleanup was also done in connection with Clean Rivers Month.

She provided the following figures:

- The Red Team at No. 8 Schoolhouse Road had nine adults and four children working for 3.5 hours (45.5 hours women/men/children hours). They collected 80 bags of trash. One separate load with miscellaneous stuff was hauled to the Boykins dump. Multiple tires and a television remain to be picked up by the county.
- The White Team at Route 35/Main Street had five adults working for 3.5 hours (17.5 women/man hours). They collected 16 bags of trash.
- The Blue Team at Powell's Hill Road had 17 adults and six children working for 3.5 hours (80.5 women/men/children hours). They collected 90 bags of trash, and two separate loads with miscellaneous stuff were hauled to the Boykins dump.

Livingston added that the club is grateful to the following groups for volunteering: Boykins Lions Club; Boykins Fire and Rescue; Boykins Baptist Church; Boykins United Methodist Church; and the Southampton County Sheriff's Department.

That work, though, might have seemed somewhat futile in light of a discovery not long afterward. She stated via email on Monday, "Not less than 24 hours from collecting trash and there are already some new deposits! I struggle to understand the mind-set of people who choose to litter. I wish I knew the ultimate solution to stopping it — stricter laws, harsher sentences, cameras?"

Residents concerned about the town's appearance are encouraged to simply get trash bags and start collecting. Livingston noted that one piece of any kind of trash every day adds up.

"They build and build until we have the mess our teams tackled on Saturday, and that was covering only three roads in the county, all of which could have been deposited in one of the multiple free dumps we have within the county. I would love to have more residents recognize the severity of the issue, stop considering it someone else's problem and step up to make a difference instead of watching the situation get worse."

'A friend is the medicine'

Youngster raises money to help ailing classmate

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CAPRON

As he endures a rare form of cancer, D.J. Bizzell, has got a champion in Capron Elementary classmate Brock Applewhite. On Thursday, the latter got to open a lemonade stand at his grandparents' business, Gurganus Peanuts in town. According to his grandmother, Dora, the boy raised money from the sale of the beverage and treats. The money is going to help D.J.'s family with medical expenses incurred from the extensive treatment the 7-year-old has been receiving.

David Bizzell said he had taken his son to a hospital on May 31 when the boy became especially sick. "It took 2-1/2 to three weeks for doctors to figure it out," said Bizzell. 'It' finally being diagnosed as undifferentiated embryonal sarcoma of the liver. According to www.kidshealth.org, that's a rare type of liver cancer that chiefly affects children. Symptoms can include a lump in the belly, pain in that area, tiredness and loss of appetite.

The first part of disease name — undifferentiated — means that the cancer cells don't look any other kind of cell for the liver or muscles. The second word — embryonal, means that cancer grew early in the fetus' development. The third part — sarcoma — means the disease grows from the kind of cells that create connective tissue, that is, cells that support other kinds of bodily tissues.

D.J. stayed at the Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters in Norfolk until June 14. Reportedly after a biopsy, there was bleeding in the liver, and the boy was flown to the intensive care unit at the University of Virginia hospital in Charlottesville. He was there until about two weeks ago, said his father. The boy's mother is Raquel Carter.

Now their son is at home and "doing great now," said Bizzell. The boy is being weaned off narcotic medicines, but still has "a bunch of medicines" to take. A feeding tube has been used as D.J.'s appetite was "not so great."

A five-day treatment is coming up and a CT scan will be used to determine if the tumor is a manageable size to be removed. He added that within a week it grew from the size of a golfball to about two-thirds the size a grapefruit. If the tumor can be excised, that will be done back at UVa. Speaking after a twice-weekly checkup on Friday at CHKD, Bizzell said that D.J. is a candidate for a liver transplant. The physicians, though, have apparently indicated they don't think that will be necessary. The affected part of the liver could be cut out, and then the liver will regenerate. Radiation treatments would follow at CHKD.

Bizzell has been moved by the community support, such as Brock's endeavor.

"It's awesome. Someone set up a Go Fund Me page, there's been a ball tournament, a fishing tournament," he said. "A lot of people have been helping out. There's lot of cards. The support is overwhelming. I can't believe it."