

Neighborhood Tree Steward

Stories of Citizen Volunteers in Portland Neighborhoods

Bryan Burch & Mark Wensel *Class of 2009*

503-970-9428 bryanburch99@me.com



Sylvan Highlands

Neighborhood School Tree Planting

October 23, 2010

Bryan and Mark are 2009 graduates of the City Nature Neighborhood Tree Steward program from the Sylvan Highlands Neighborhood Association where they are active in the Sustainability Committee and the newly formed Tree and Trail Committee.

The idea of a neighborhood tree planting project first came to us during a tree planting event at Mt Tabor Middle School. After the planting, it was easy to see the major improvement made by these young trees and how they would

look decades into maturity. Working beside energetic students and their parents was encouraging and fulfilling – an experience we wanted to duplicate. Our Neighborhood Association agreed that East Sylvan Middle School would be an excellent location and soon the principal and science teachers bought in; the event was scheduled for late October 2010.

A year prior to the event, we requested funds from the Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement and were awarded a grant to help pay for the trees and communicate the event around our neighborhood. About six months prior to the event, PP&R City Nature agreed to supply tools, mulch and stakes. At four months before the event we found two

excellent Coast redwoods at the Friends of Trees end-of-season sale. David Odom sold them to us for a great price and threw in delivery, mulch, stakes, and tie line.

With our first two of 16 trees in the ground, we realized what a big job we had ahead of us and made an enrollment push throughout our neighborhood. At the same time Karl and Autumn from City Nature asked if we would be interested in linking our event to the graduation of the 2010 Tree Stewards and the annual DIG-IT Tree Planting event. We absolutely agreed. With help from PP&R City Nature we negotiated with the school district's maintenance and utilities departments for tree placement and species.

The tremendous amount of publicity drew 85 participants including ESMS students, SHNA neighbors, Tree Stewards, the Bill Naito Award winners, great publicity and tree planting assistance from the Portland Fruit Tree Project, and Friends of Trees.

It was so important that we started with a first simple step and moved forward one step at a time. If we had realized the entire scope of the project at the onset it would have overwhelmed us, but with slow and steady progress, every obstacle was easily overcome and helped us plan for what might happen next. City Nature staff were excellent resources and we are extremely grateful for their help.



Photo Courtesy of Bob Langan

Mark (left) and Bryan (right) speaking at the 2010 Dig-It