

DIGGING DEEP

By Aaron Martin

Held for just the second time on Friday, October 28, the Purdue Day of Service has already become a shining example of success through both small steps and giant leaps.

Success through small steps stems from the modest goal of the event, which is to bring a small but dedicated group of volunteers to Purdue's campus one day each year to plant trees—to give back, one tree at a time.

Giant leaps can be seen in its year-to-year growth. Productivity increased—dramatically—as the number of trees planted skyrocketed from 62 in 2021 to 325 in 2022. Additionally, interest in the event was so strong this year that the registration limit was reached in a matter of hours.

In the end, nearly 100 alumni and friends showed up to plant trees at Horticulture Park.

Sue Campbell (S'73, MS S'77), a retired biology teacher from Mishawaka, Indiana, was among those who had to join the waiting list. Once called upon, she gladly made the two-hour drive to West Lafayette to volunteer.

"I volunteered because I wanted to give back to Purdue—it's my favorite place in the world," says Campbell, who has four children who also graduated from the university. "I do like to volunteer when I can, so I was happy to wait and make the trip. I think some of that desire was instilled in me during my time at Purdue. I learned how to persevere and how working as a team is really important."

Many volunteers had also attended the inaugural event, including Jennifer Kawlewski (PG'22). An administrative assistant in Purdue's College of Pharmacy, Kawlewski arrived wearing her complimentary T-shirt from the 2021 event but quickly replaced it with the 2022 version.

"I always enjoy doing things for Purdue, which does so much for so many people, and it really is fun," Kawlewski says. "This event is extremely important. With all of the growth and development the university has seen recently, it's important that we get out and make sure we add back some beauty."

Purdue University and the Purdue for Life Foundation created the Purdue Day of Service to encourage alumni and friends of the university to embrace volunteerism. This event aligns with Purdue's 1869 Tree Planting Master Plan, which calls for planting 3,738 trees by fiscal year 2025, and the Sustainability Master Plan. The total number of trees to be planted was determined by doubling 1,869, which is the year Purdue was founded.

The event also reinforced Purdue's standing as an Arbor Day Foundation Tree Campus Higher Education institution, a status the university has held since 2009.

“Our inaugural event was a big success, but the response this year has been incredible,” says Courtney Cassady, senior director of outreach and volunteerism for the Purdue for Life Foundation. “People were willing to join our waiting list and be on call just to volunteer. That says a lot about how dedicated the Purdue family is. Our volunteers really worked hard and had fun.”

Lend a hand! Help support Purdue’s campus beautification efforts.

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