

One Planet Fund supports native tree planting at Stearns History Museum

Contact Elizabeth Rydeen to apply for grants: erydeen@fslf.org; 320.632.0624



STEARNS HISTORY MUSEUM NATIVE TREE PLANTING PROJECT

**BY ANN MARIE JOHNSON,
COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

On a late October afternoon last fall, five trees native to central Minnesota were planted on museum grounds by staff from Great River Greening (greatrivergreening.org), a St. Paul-based nonprofit dedicated to nature-based climate solutions through land restoration and sustainable land management. The Native Tree Planting project was made possible thanks to a One Planet Fund

grant from the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls (fslf.org). The project was part of an effort to strengthen the urban landscape and help create a more sustainable and resilient native ecosystem, one that promotes health and well-being for the entire central Minnesota community and beyond. The three ironwood and two common hackberry trees that were planted will serve as a setting for natural and environmental education and will provide some much-needed shade for the often sun-drenched museum plaza.



The Stearns History Museum has worked hard over the past few years to restore and revitalize the museum landscape, a landscape consisting of six-acres adjacent to Heritage Park, a 75.5-acre city park. In conjunction with the Native Tree Planting project, Great River Greening is working to restore historic prairie and oak savanna ecosystems in the park and museum grounds through a LCCMR (Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources) grant known as Pollinator Central IV. The highly urbanized location of the museum and park allows the sites to serve as visible examples of the importance and possibility of a cleaner and more natural environment in urban landscapes. (Watch for future updates on the LCCMR Pollinator Central IV project – Funding for this project was provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR).)

The newly planted, drought-resistant and disease-tolerant trees were selected based partly on their adaptability to the museum's microclimate and soil conditions. According to the University of Minnesota Extension office, both common hackberry and ironwood can often be found in use as shade or boulevard trees as they are easily established and grow well in urban landscapes (<https://extension.umn.edu/find-plants/trees-and-shrubs>; accessed 1/2/2025). Common hackberry is a large deciduous tree that is able to withstand heat and has a cool-looking corky bark when mature. Ironwood is an extremely dense and durable hardwood tree that has drooping clusters of seed bean pods, a distinctive finely-furrowed grey to brown bark and seeds that are a good source of food for birds and small mammals.

The tree planting event in October gave museum staff, board members and volunteers the opportunity to learn proper tree planting techniques. Brennan Blue, stewardship director with Great River Greening, along with restoration



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technician, McKenna Clark, and program manager, Becca Tucker, demonstrated planting one of the trees, emphasizing proper site preparation and follow-up maintenance and care. Tips included digging a hole 1-2" wider than the tree's root system, roughing up the sides of the hole with a shovel or spade and eliminating air pockets by watering during and immediately after planting. They also emphasized checking the roots to make sure they are not root bound, loosening and making vertical cuts as needed along the sides of the root ball and crisscross along the bottom. Trees to be planted should be placed in prepared holes with their graft or trunk flare 1" above the soil surface, spreading the roots and backfilling with a few inches of soil. Gently firm newly added soil and repeat until the hole is filled. Form a ridge around the tree to hold water, stake and protect the tree and watch it grow!

The purpose of the Native Tree Planting project fits the vision of the One Planet Fund grant of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, which provided the financial resources for the project. The focus of the One Planet Fund is to help shape a better future for the planet by addressing current environmental challenges and helping to teach better ways of caring for the Earth, a place that belongs to everyone. Through this project, the Stearns History Museum seeks to encourage present and future generations to work together to keep central Minnesota and the world healthy and sustainable, promoting awareness and understanding and educating through programming, advocacy and dialogue.

Be sure to stop by and check out the new trees. You can help us watch them grow!



One Vegetable One Community

Elizabeth Rydeen, CRD

October 18, 2023

The overall goal of One Vegetable One Community (OVOC) is to encourage gardeners of all levels to plant, grow, cook and share the “vegetable of the year” to support healthy lifestyles. A One Planet Fund grant of \$420 supported the distribution of free seed packets to communities in Morrison County.

With the funds, the committee was able to purchase enough seeds and supplies to assemble and give out 2,000 pepper seed packets (jalapeno and bell) in Morrison County. Four hundred of the seed packets were distributed between public libraries in Pierz, Little Falls and Royalton for residents to pick up and plant. Around 860 seed packets were distributed between all the schools in the county and several classrooms even participated in planting seeds in their classrooms.

Samantha Barron, from the University of Minnesota Extension office in Little Falls, coordinates the program, “We have received such amazing feedback from the community and partners with this project that our plan is to continue to grow OVOC program in 2024.”



Pepper seeds planted and creatively labeled. OVOC did a taste test in the winter with students from the Little Falls schools to promote the vegetable of the year.

Controlled burn at Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Museum

Elizabeth Rydeen, CRD

With funding from the One Planet Fund, the Morrison County Historical Society completed a prescribed burn on approximately a ½ acre plot located onsite just north of the Weyerhaeuser Museum. Like all prairie ecosystems, the plant community at the museum relies on fire as a way to maintain its ecological equilibrium. The prairie burn was completed on May 3 by Prairie Restorations, Inc. of Princeton.

Environmentally, this prescribed burn benefitted the local environment by removing old vegetation and preventing some of the trees and shrubs that would shade out native prairie plants. The burn also helped reduced the spread of invasive and pest species. The



major climate and environmental component to prairie burns is that prairies are like all grasslands, a significant carbon sink. Their continued health is an essential component of effective climate action. The prescribed burn benefitted our community and the people we serve as well. The public was made aware of the prescribed burn and the environmental importance of doing a prescribed burn through our website. Visitors are encouraged to visit our prairie and are made aware of the importance of preserving prairies and native plant species. Prairies, with their deep roots and relatively rapid carbon storage capacity, are our allies in fighting climate change, and it is essential that the next generation of stewards are well-equipped to protect them.

One Planet Fund connects kids to the outdoors

Elizabeth Rydeen, CRD

Crow River Trail Guards has been connecting kids to the outdoors for 31 years. It serves approximately 40 youth (8-19 years old) who gather on Saturday mornings from spring through October each year. The goal is to bond with nature and work together to improve nature trails along the Crow River near Paynesville. The day starts at 9 a.m. for opening circle to go over the rules and talk about current plans for the morning. The youth then head to the trails with rakes, shovels and wagons full of mulch. No easy task for kids! Mid-morning, a bell from the bell tower rings bringing everyone back together for a snack of fresh fruit and the occasional quest speaker (firemen, police, DNR, nutritionist) or a team-building game.

The youth go back to work until they hear the bell ring again at 11:30 a.m. when it's time for a healthy, nutritious, homecooked meal, provided by our now paid cook. They break bread all together and give thanks and praise for all that has been done by everyone! When lunch is finished, everyone cleans up and makes sure equipment is put away and the picnic shelter and kitchen are cleaner than they found it. A One-Planet Fund grant helped Trail Guards hire a part-time cook to provide healthier, more nutritious food for the kids, with the hope of instilling good eating habits.

If you are looking for a new destination to explore, please stop by the 12-acre nature park. It's along the Crow River in Paynesville at 200 Burr Street. You can see the wonderful work that these kids have done over the years!



From the final report: "Thank you so much for choosing Crow River Trail Guards to receive this grant. We know there are many qualified organizations to be considered. We are very grateful that you chose us."

One Planet Fund supports Royalton High School's YES! Club

Elizabeth Rydeen, CRD

Using funds received from the One Planet Fund, the Royalton High School YES/Tech Club reconstructed and restored the retaining wall behind the school's greenhouse and planted a flowerbed in front of the wall. YES! stands for Youth Eco Solutions, a state-wide organization with a mission to empower youth to create solutions to today's ecological challenges through hands-on action projects. The grant was used to buy materials such as cement pavers, landscaping plastic, and mulch. The students started by removing the previous retaining wall, then dug dirt out from behind and below where the old wall was to make the new wall straight and the flowerbed level. Next, they lined the back of the wall with plastic to prevent erosion before they used the pavers to build the new wall. They finished by lining the flowerbed with plastic to stop weeds from growing and poured mulch over the top of the plastic liner for a more appealing look.

This project benefits both the environment and our community. Environmental benefits include flowers for pollinators and a strengthened wall to prevent erosion from the hill above it. This project also created a better-looking area behind the greenhouse which is beneficial to the people of the community who see it when they come to buy plants and flowers from the greenhouse.

The One Planet Fund is sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota. Applications due February 1, July 1, and November 1. For more information contact Elizabeth Rydeen: erydeen@fslf.org or 320-632-0624.



Left: The crew that rebuilt the retaining wall - Damian Campbell, Sawyer Simmons, Riley Lutz, Braydon Gibbs, Jameson Klug, Drew Yourczek, Kyler Panek



Right: The team that planted the pollinator garden - Kendal Hagen, Mya Yourczek, Addison Schoenrock, Mya Wolbeck, Stella Hagen, Brianna Lenz, Ava Schoenrock

One Planet Fund helps Linden Hill replace trees devastated by spring storms

Elizabeth Rydeen, CRD

Members of the Friends of Linden Hill's Gardens and Grounds Committee invited the Franciscan Sisters to see the trees and shrubbery purchased by a \$1,000 grant from the One Planet Fund. Back in May, Linden Hill Historic Estate lost 13 mature trees in two storms just days apart. The loss was devastating for the staff, volunteers and people who love walking the grounds of Linden Hill. The 9-acre property, nestled along the banks of the Mississippi River, is known for its beauty and variety of trees, including linden trees for which the estate is named.

The committee is eager for more requests! Please help us spread the word. Applications for the fall cycle are due November 1. The guidelines and application are available on the sisters' website: fslf.org. Contact Elizabeth Rydeen for more information: erydeen@fslf.org or (320)632-0624.



Pictured: Sister Janice Wiechman, Doug Anderson, Rosanne Fischer, Woody Neudecker, Sister Cordy Korkowski, Cathy Boost, Liz Rydeen. Photo by Amanda Lampert.

This article was featured in the Fall 2022 issue of *Our Journey*.

One Planet Fund completes first year!

Elizabeth Rydeen

The first year of the One Planet Fund resulted in 21 grants for a variety of innovative and worthwhile projects, many of which educate and engage students and youth, a primary goal of the One Planet Fund. From pollinator gardens, prairie restoration and tree planting to Earth Day and climate change curriculum, water testing clinics and recycling and clean-up projects, the fund accomplished its objective of encouraging and supporting climate emergency action projects in central Minnesota.

The One Planet Fund is one way the Franciscan community is responding to Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*. The fund seeks to encourage faith-based groups, especially youth groups, and other nonprofit organizations or community groups, including schools, to develop creative projects that address climate change mitigation and promote sustainable living. Applications are due November 1, February 1 and July 1. Maximum grant: \$1,000. To apply, contact Elizabeth Rydeen: 320-632-0624; email: erydeen@fslf.org. See application at fslf.org.

With a grant from the One Planet Fund, the Morrison County Agricultural Society engaged a group of 10-year-old girls to beautify the Morrison County Fairgrounds. The girls raised the flowers from seedlings, then created various planters to be placed around the fair, including this one made from recycled cedar posts and tin from an old barn.



Soil Health Field Day in Morrison County

Sister Carolyn Law

I had the joy of attending the Soil Health Field Day in Morrison County on August 10, 2022. It was the first time for this event in Morrison County. This program was dedicated to sharing information with local producers about the advantages of cover crops and no-till or minimum-till practices. About 100 folks were in attendance. The presentations were always very respectful and appreciative toward the producers.

Cover crops add nutrients to the soil, help prevent erosion, provide forage for livestock, increase the healthy bacteria and fungi and put carbon into the soil.

Cover crops along with minimum-till also reduce the number of inputs (fertilizer, herbicides) needed and save on fuel costs due to fewer times tractors have to go over the land. By implementing new practices, producers can also obtain some carbon credit payments. A lot of study is being done to determine best practices for the most effective results in crop yields and profitability.

I found the day refreshing. The soil health movement gives me hope for the future of the planet. Our One Planet Fund co-sponsored the event.



Above Left to Right: Shannon Wettstein - Soil and Water Conservation District, Amy Robak - CentraSota, Sister Carolyn Law



Left: Field demonstration on cover crops and layers of soil. The land is cultivated by Dave Hubner of Sobieski. Dave is also on the Morrison County Soil and Water Conservation District Board.



Note our name on the banner. Over and over, Amy and Shannon thanked us for our support and what we are doing to heal the earth.