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Tree-Campus U.S.A. Award and Arbor Day

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Tree Campus USA Award and Arbor Day
Bill Meyer, WSU Senior Groundskeeper (Retired)

Recently WSU was awarded the prestigious Tree Campus USA recognition by the Arbor Day Foundation. WSU is the first campus in the MNSCU system to receive this highly coveted designation. The All Campus Arboretum and Land Stewardship Committee has worked diligently over the past two years to articulate the standards that are required for consideration for Tree Campus USA.

So, what is Tree Campus USA and what does WSU’s involvement in it mean for our campus? Tree Campus USA is a national program that identifies colleges and universities for promoting healthy trees and involving students and staff in conservation efforts. WSU has provided documentation through a comprehensive plan on how the university plans to meet the required five core standards needed for Tree Campus recognition.

These five core standards include having a tree care advisory board, having a Tree Care Program, allocating finances for an annual campus tree care program, hosting an annual Arbor Day observation, and providing service-learning projects involving students. All these standards have been incorporated into a strategic plan for the campus arboretum that will later be included in the WSU Campus Master Plan.

On Friday April 24th during the WSU Arbor Day Celebration, a representative from the National Arbor Day Foundation formally designated WSU as a USA Tree Campus. The entire day included activities ranging from tree plantings, visits from Winona area 3rd graders and an 11th grade class from C-FC High School (WI), and talks on Emerald Ash Borer. In addition, activities showcasing pollinators and poetry readings highlighted the day. I hope you had a chance to stop by and participate in the spirit of the day.

A few of you have asked about the Arboretum Restoration Initiative that began during this past spring break. You have mentioned that a number of trees were taken down and were wondering why this was being done. About 30 trees on the WSU campus were found to have some structural problems and were evaluated by a number of certified arborists, including our new Arboretum Director, Gerald Landby. A decision was made to remove these trees and prune many of the trees on the WSU campus. While in some ways the removal of approximately thirty trees would seem to fly in the face of the Tree Campus USA recognition, upon further thought these efforts will help maintain and preserve the campus arboretum for future students and staff.

Staying true to the objectives of Arbor Day, new trees will be planted throughout the WSU campus replacing those trees removed.