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Department of
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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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State Forestry offering grants to Alaska schools to plant trees

(Anchorage, AK) – The Alaska Division of Forestry is offering to help Alaska schools obtain grants to plant trees in honor of Arbor Day, and to help celebrate the 100th anniversary of the National Association of State Foresters (NASF).

The grants are for up to \$400 to help schools buy, ship and plant trees on school grounds. Funded in part by the U.S. Forest Service, the grants are part of NASF's partnerships with forestry divisions in Alaska and around the country, said Jim Renkert, a division natural resource manager.

“Planting a tree symbolizes strength, resilience and hope, and is an important way to affirm our believe in a better future,” Renkert said. “With COVID-19 currently touching all our lives, these traits are more important than ever.”

The national grant campaign is part of NASF's Centennial Challenge to honor the work of the association in providing a unified voice for state and private forestry in the United States since 1920, and to highlight the social, environmental, and economic contributions state forestry agencies have made nationwide for over a century.

In sponsoring this “Centennial Challenge” through the end of 2020, the Alaska Division of Forestry's goal is to have 100 schools plant at least one tree each to celebrate Arbor Day and to celebrate Alaskans' strength and resiliency, Renkert said. The grants can support planting trees outside, or indoors if a school has a suitable interior space or a greenhouse.

Arbor Day in Alaska is usually celebrated on the third Monday in May, which this year falls on May 18. With COVID-19 concerns keeping schools closed, however, the division is encouraging schools to apply for grants, but plan the actual tree plantings later this year or in 2021 when school is back in session.

For applications and instructions on how to apply for ASF Centennial Challenge grants, go to the Division of Forestry's Community Forestry Program website at <http://forestry.alaska.gov/community/grants>.

The NASF grant program also affords schools an excellent opportunity to become recognized by the national Arbor Day Foundation as a [Tree Campus K-12](#), Renkert said. This program seeks “to inspire the next generation of tree stewards through

experiences that bring the benefits of trees to life both outside and in the classroom.” To achieve recognition, schools are required to meet four basic program goals:

- Maintain a group with representation from staff, students, and community dedicated to achieving Tree Campus K-12 recognition.
- Conduct activities that connect students to trees and their global benefits inside or outside of the classroom.
- Engage students in a project that brings the school’s tree spirit to the community.
- Hold a celebration of trees within the school or community.

Schools are encouraged to involve students in the grant application and planning process. Schools can reach many of the benchmarks required for recognition by completing applications and hosting a student-led planting event,. For more information on the benefits of becoming a Tree Campus K-12, go to the Arbor Day Foundation website: <https://www.arborday.org/programs/tree-campus-k-12/>

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