



Earth Team Volunteer Newsletter

November 2009



*Tulsa County Conservation District
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Tulsa County Blue Thumb*

2009 Blue Thumb Training Class in Tulsa Graduates 21 Future and Current Volunteers

On September 26th and 27th, volunteers came together at Memorial High School to learn about Blue Thumb and how they could work together to improve water quality in Tulsa County as well as across Oklahoma. We had volunteers from Tulsa, Collinsville, Tahlequah, Stillwater, Glenpool, Guthrie, Jenks, and Welch join us for two days focused on water and non-point source pollution. The first day of training was geared towards learning a bit about the general environment and each other. Day two was part field day and part lab work. During the morning of day two, the trainees traveled to Mingo Creek near 46th St N and US 169. This is a creek that runs through a good part of North Tulsa and Owasso on it's way to Bird Creek. We found some sensitive macroinvertebrate species, which is a sign that the physical habitat and water quality are both doing well. The stream bottom substrate is mostly cobble and gravel with a small amount of sediment which makes for a great habitat for bugs and small fish. The volunteers got to see many different species that were trapped in our kick net used to catch the bugs as they give up their safe spots under rocks and twigs as a flurry of shuffling feet stirred up their previous home. After this, the volunteers spent time pulling a seine to try and catch some of the fish that were living in the creek. Fish collections take place every 3-5 years and give a good look into a longer time period in the life of a creek than the macroinvertebrates do. During our few runs, we found longeared sunfish and two species of darters. After taking samples of the creek water back to Memorial, the volunteers began the next stage of the training which involved testing the samples for certain pollutants and nutrients. As part of the Blue Thumb program, volunteers sample certain water quality parameters like temperature, dissolved oxygen, nitrate and nitrite nitrogen, ammonia nitrogen, chloride , pH, and water saturation. Over a period of years, this data is extremely valuable to learning about the health of that stream. This training will help the volunteers to become monitors on active and new Blue Thumb stream sites in Tulsa, Payne, Oklahoma, Logan, and Cherokee Counties. Way to go guys!





Please also consider joining us for an Outreach Education workshop on Sat Nov 7th from 10-2 at the TCCD office. Lunch will be provided for volunteers. We will be focusing on different activities and methods for teaching people about the environment.

Please mark the Volunteer Christmas Party on your calendar! It will be on Dec 8th from 6-8:30 at the OSU Extension office at 15th and Yale. Our volunteers and their families are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Environmental Word of the Month

Freecycling - Rather than throwing away a used item, freecyclers look for others in the community through local Freecycle groups that may have use for an item. This keeps used but still working items and appliances out of landfills and provides a working item to someone who needs it.

It's a grassroots and entirely nonprofit movement of people who are giving (and getting) stuff for free in their own towns and thus keeping good stuff out of landfills. Membership is free, and everything posted must be FREE, legal and appropriate for all ages. To view the items being given away or sought in Tulsa, you must be a member of the local group. To view the local group posts, visit the local Yahoo Group where they are located by clicking on the link below.

Visit their website at Freecycle.org and see if there is anyone trying to get rid of something that you could use! The Tulsa Freecycle group can be found here: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TulsaOkFreecycle/>.

A Brief History

On May 1st, 2003, Deron Beal sent out the first e-mail announcing The Freecycle Network™ to about 30 or 40 friends and a handful of nonprofits in Tucson, Arizona. At the time Deron founded The Freecycle Network, he worked with a small nonprofit organization, RISE, which provides recycling services to downtown businesses and transitional employment to Tucsonans in need. As the team recycled, rather than watching perfectly good items being thrown away, they found themselves calling or driving around to see if various local nonprofits could use them. Thinking there had to be an easier way, Beal set up that first Freecycle e-mail group in a way that permitted everyone in Tucson to give and to get. Freecycle was off and running.

The Freecycle concept has since spread to over 85 countries, where there are thousands of local groups representing millions of members -- people helping people and "changing the world one gift at a time." As a result, we are currently keeping over 500 tons a day out of landfills! This amounts to five times the height of Mt. Everest in the past year alone, when stacked in garbage trucks!

By giving freely with no strings attached, members of The Freecycle Network help instill a sense of generosity of spirit as they strengthen local community ties and promote environmental sustainability and reuse. People from all walks of life have joined together to turn trash into treasure.



Information taken from
Freecycle.org

TCCD Station at Nowata Natural Resource Day Focuses on Trees

Brenda Waltman, District Manager for Nowata County CD, requested our assistance with two Natural Resource Days on September 16th and 17th. On the 16th, we were at Oklahoma Union Elementary School in South Coffeyville talking to 3-5th graders. The topic of our station was trees. In order to give the kids an up close look at the inner-working of a tree, we let them look at some of our tree cookies. A tree cookie is a cross section of a tree which has been baked and sanded to prominently display the rings and preserved tissue inside the tree. It gives a unique perspective that you can get from looking at illustration in a text book. The district has about 10 different types of trees represented which show an incredible amount of variation. Some trees have dramatically different heartwood and sapwood, like a redbud or Osage orange. Other show little to no variation like the pecan or pine.



We talked about the information that you could gather about a tree just by looking at the number and width of the rings contained in them. The number of rings will tell you the age of the tree and the width of rings will give you some information about the growing conditions. The kids thought of many ways that humans use trees including food production, housing, tools, musical instruments, fuel, furniture, paper, tea, coffee, and many more. We also talked about some wood has a pleasant smell to it, the best example of which are cedar and pine. The smell of cedar wood reminds me of being on the deck at my grandmother's house. Others are reminded of a hope chest of a relative containing some family heirlooms.

On September 17th, we went to the Nowata Middle School to talk to 6-7th graders on the same topic. We were outside on a wonderful day that saw clouds across much of eastern Oklahoma, except for our location in Nowata. I actually left with a sunburn! The older kids were able to talk about more complex topics and think about something that they drive or walk past nearly every day. When talking about how trees are constantly trying to get closer and closer to the sun as they grow, one kid proclaimed "TREES ARE ALIVE?" Trees are alive and so was the inquisitive nature of kids at two wonderful Natural Resource Days with Nowata County Conservation District and Nowata NRCS staff. Thanks for inviting us.



Medical Profession and the Environment: Nursing Students at Tulsa Tech Lemley Campus Learn About Ways They Can Help Protect Our Environment

The District was invited to speak to one of the Anatomy and Physiology classes at Tulsa Tech on "How Community is Affected by a Good or Poor Environment". We discussed some of the properties of a good environment like adequate public transportation, affordable and available health care, the natural environment and climate, low unemployment rates, eating habits, low restaurant density, and low crime rates. Some properties of a poor environment include presence of Superfund sites or toxic waste disposal sites, issues of environmental justice, high car density, high industrial density, indoor air pollution, and the high prevalence of pharmaceutical and personal care products (PPCPs). We also talked about some of the things that medical professional are exposed to on a fairly daily basis that may not be beneficial to their health. These can include methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), Vancomycin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (VISA), x-rays, dental amalgam, and spent x-ray fixer. People in the medical profession have a unique ability to affect the environment by helping to decrease the spread of disease, limiting the amount of drugs and prescriptions reaching the water supply, and helping to keep chemicals used to develop medical images out of the environment. It was nice to talk to a group that typically does not hear much about the environment and the students were glad to voice their thoughts and opinions. We are currently working with a professor there to schedule another presentation soon.

**It's That Time Of Year Again!
And Your Help is Needed.**

The magical night of giving at the Tulsa Promenade Mall is one way we raise funds to provide volunteer awards, gifts, recognition, food and beverages at different times throughout the year. When we sell tickets in advance for \$5.00 we get all of the proceeds. If you can help sell or would like to buy some tickets please let us know.

What is "Magical Night of Giving?"

"Magical Night of Giving" gives local non-profit organizations a chance to raise money. The mall will close to the general public, and then re-open for a night of shopping. The evening will include special store discounts, gifts, door prizes, entertainment, and free gift wrapping to make customers feel like a million bucks. Non-profit groups sell tickets to this fun event. **The groups keep all the funds generated by selling the \$5 tickets.**

When is the event?

Sunday, November 15, 2009. 6:30pm-10:00pm

How does "Magical Night of Giving" work?

Area non-profit organizations have been invited to sell tickets to this exclusive shopping event. The mall will close, then reopen at for ticket holders ONLY. Each ticket holder will receive a list of special discounts offered only to them and valid that evening only at participating stores.

Magical Offers:

Stores will be offering special discounts for ticket holders valid that night only, offering a free gift, having an in-store drawing for a prize and/or offering refreshments. In addition, we will have spaces for local vendors to set up throughout the mall. Please contact Kelly Wilkerson at 627-9282 for more information.

Calendar of Events

Okmulgee CCD Natural Resource Day

We will be assisting Okmulgee CCD with an educational event at the Southern Mansion outside of Okmulgee. The topic of this event is water.
October 23rd from 9 AM - 3PM

Bug Picking Sessions

We will be picking bugs from the macroinvertebrate samples that we collected this summer. We have 8 samples to sort through. We will be working from 1 PM- 9:30 PM on Thursday Oct 29th and from 10 AM – 4:30 PM on Friday Oct 30th at the district offices.

Environmental Education Workshop

This workshop will help you grow as an educator and will highlight new programs and methods to utilize in the classroom, summer camp, or youth group.
November 7th from 10 AM-2 PM at the TCCD office and will cost \$10

Magical Night of Giving at Promenade Mall

This event for non-profits allows us to sell tickets to exclusive hours at Promenade Mall and keep 100% of the proceeds. We will be collecting tickets at the door and making fish prints.
November 15th from 6-10 PM

Rentie Grove outdoor classroom tours

All of the 3rd grade classes at Jenks East Elementary will take a 30 min walk through their 100+ acre outdoor classroom. Volunteers needed to watch the kids, take pictures, supplement presentation, etc.
Nov 19th, 20th, 23rd, and 24th

Volunteer Christmas Party

It's never too early in the year to put a Christmas Party on the calendar! We will be having our usual potluck party where the district provides the proteins and you bring a side dish. We will also play White Elephant/ Dirty Santa.
Dec 8th from 6-8:30 at OSU Extension
4116 E 15th St Tulsa, OK 74112

Volunteer Notes

- Thank you to all of our volunteers, NRCS, and Conservation District employees that worked one or multiple shifts at the Tulsa State Fair. We could not do this event without your help and we want to extend our deepest appreciation for your efforts!
- We are in need of some people to help us sell tickets to the Magical Nigh of Giving. They cost \$5 and we get to keep all of the money. If you can sell some, please let us know.
- The Volunteer Christmas party is also coming up soon. We are looking for some people that can help us apply for some donations for the event from Walmart, Reasor's, Target, and other merchants. We rely on these donations to purchase nearly all of the supplies for this event.
- We still have openings for the Environmental Education workshop coming up on Nov 7th. We would like to get as many people as we can to attend the workshop and start some outreach education presentations. If you would be interested, please let us know.