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**City of Duluth Parks and Recreation Division**

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**SUBJECT: City of Duluth Celebrates Arbor Day Today**

**BY: Amy Norris, Public Information Coordinator**

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## City of Duluth Celebrates Arbor Day 2011

Mayor Don Ness, City Councilor Patrick Boyle, community members gathered to declare today, May 31<sup>st</sup>, Arbor Day. This day marked the first of hundreds of boulevard trees to be planted this season in Duluth. The first ceremonial tree was planted at 529 North 12 ½ Avenue East, just a few feet from where the first gypsy moth caterpillar, an invasive tree defoliator, was found last summer.

Today's 2011 Arbor Day celebration revolved around the planting of trees resulting from several new initiatives announced by the City of Duluth.

The first acknowledging was the receipt of two grants, one from the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation and the Department of Natural Resources for a total of over \$26,000 to purchase trees to be planted on city boulevards. These trees will be put into areas that qualify as Community Development Block Grant zones. (Both grants were awarded, in part, because volunteers will be used for the tree plantings)

Also announced was the establishment of a dedicated tree fund, where people may donate toward a future boulevard and/or park tree planting in areas of greatest need. In addition, the city will commit \$5000 a year to a fund for a match with homeowners who are willing to put \$25 per tree towards the purchase, planting and caring for boulevard trees.

This spring, city staff built a holding bed at its Buildings and Grounds Maintenance Facility in which over 250 bare root trees were placed as they await planting spaces. In it are over ten species of trees, including maple, oak, elm, and Ohio buckeye. The rest of the DNR grant money will be spent next season to purchase additional trees.

Many people intuitively feel the value of large, urban trees, but their many effects can actually be quantitatively measured. It is these values that lead the City of Duluth to rededicating itself to the re-establishment of Duluth as a Tree City USA.

For example, studies have found that: apartments and offices rent more quickly in areas with trees; customers are willing to pay up to 10% for certain products from businesses on tree-lined streets; a great reduction in crime and physical violence in areas with high levels of greenery; patients have higher recovery rates when hospital windows have views of trees; female adolescents have higher self-esteem in areas with trees; and, workers who view nature from their desks feel more patient and less frustrated and have more enthusiasm for their jobs and satisfaction with their lives.

In addition, asphalt streets last longer when shaded by trees; proper landscaping including trees can reduce air conditioning costs by up to 50%; property values increase up to 20% for those with trees; there is a reduction of the heat island effect in cities with more canopy cover; and, trees reduce atmospheric pollution and capture storm water.

To help retain its Tree City status, during the summer of 2009, Duluth applied for and received an Americorps member; part of a new program through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency called the Minnesota GreenCorps. This Urban Forestry Specialist worked with the Duluth City Forester and the Tree Commission to help find ways to inventory the urban canopy utilizing volunteers, to find funding to purchase new trees, to assist with updating the Tree Ordinance, and to coordinate the development of a plan to deal with Emerald Ash Borer and other invasive tree species.

As a result, in the spring of 2010, Duluth held its first Arbor Day since 2003, part of the requirements for regaining and retaining Tree City USA status. A tree was planted in Chester Park, and thousands of young trees were planted by the public and school groups across the city. Educational programs were given to many groups about invasive species and the importance of forest diversity.

Duluth's 2011 Arbor will prove to be an important milestone in the timeline of Duluth's Urban Forestry history. With threats from insects like the Gypsy Moth and Emerald Ash Borer at our doorstep, increasing the diversity of the tree canopy is vital to a healthy urban forest.

A citizen forestry program that includes tree inventory and learning about invasive species will now be expanded to including tree planting. Those who would be

interested in having a tree planted on their boulevard should contact Buildings and Grounds Maintenance at 218-730-4490. Those wishing to volunteer for tree planting nights and weekends should contact the City Volunteer Coordinator at 218-269-4712

Celebrate Arbor Day 2011 - plant a tree!

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