

# Gov. Markell celebrates Arbor Day with over 500 students at McIlvaine Early Childhood Center



At left, Governor Markell addresses over 500 enthusiastic kindergarten students at McIlvaine Early Childhood Center as Caesar Rodney School District Superintendent Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald looks on. At right, McIlvaine's newly-named "Delaware Principal of the Year" Dr. Sherry Kijowski presides over the ribbon-cutting ceremony to formally dedicate the school's new "Tree Walk & Talk Arboretum" as part of Arbor Day ceremonies.

MAGNOLIA, Del. (May 14) – Governor Jack Markell celebrated Arbor Day by joining over 500 kindergarten students at McIlvaine Early Childhood Center for a ribbon-cutting to unveil the school's new "Tree Walk & Talk Arboretum." Gov. Markell also honored winners of the Delaware Forest Service's annual Arbor School Poster Contest and joined in commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the adoption of the American holly as Delaware's state tree in 1939.

A complete gallery of [Arbor Day event photos](#) is at the [Delaware Forest Service's Facebook Page](#). High-resolution images of Arbor Day Poster Winners are at: <http://delawaretrees.com/2014arbordayceremony.html>

Forestry officials also announced plans for the State of Delaware to purchase four parcels of Sussex County forestland

in the next year at a cost of \$1.35 million. The properties, which will become part of the 12,400-acre Redden State Forest in Georgetown, marks the final phase of the state's ten-year "Green Horizons Project" that has permanently protected over 4,000 acres since 2004.



The State of Delaware plans to purchase 370 acres of forest at a cost of \$1.35 million, with funding provided by the U.S. Forest Legacy Program, Delaware's Open Space Program, and The Conservation Fund.

McIlvaine Early Childhood Center (MECC) in Magnolia is the state's largest all-day kindergarten program with over 500 students. As a pilot site for Governor Markell's World Language Initiative (WLI) Program, MECC features the state's only Chinese language immersion program. About 100 kindergartners spend half their day learning literacy, math, science and social studies in Chinese and the other half in English speaking classes. WLI was successfully launched thanks to the efforts of Kevin Fitzgerald, Caesar Rodney School District superintendent, Sherry Kijowski, McIlvaine Early Childhood Center principal, and Brook Castillo, assistant principal.

MECC's new "Tree Walk and Talk Arboretum" is the centerpiece of the school's effort to incorporate "place-based" environmental learning as part of Delaware's ["No Child Left Inside"](#) initiative. Funded by a "GreenWorks!" grant from the American Forest Foundation's [Project Learning Tree Program](#), the project was completed with the help of the Delaware Forest Service, MECC staff and students, the Caesar Rodney High School FFA, and local businesses. The arboretum was completed at a planting event at the school on May 7. [Photos of the planting event](#) can be found at the [Forest Service Facebook page](#).



A sign in McIlvaine's new arboretum appears in four languages: English, Latin, Spanish, and Chinese.

The Delaware Forest Service's [Arbor Day School Poster Contest](#) is an annual competition open to students in grades K to 5 in all public, private, charter, and home schools. Winners are chosen from each county in four categories: kindergarten, grades 1-2, grades 3-4, and grade 5. This year's state winner was Isabella Garber, a Grade 5 student at Christ the Teacher School in Newark.



Rep. Harvey R. Kenton (R-36) and Governor Jack Markell (at right) join fifth-grader Isabella Garber of Christ the Teacher School in Newark, winner of the state's Arbor Day school poster contest at the awards ceremony at McIlvaine Early Childhood Center in Magnolia.

Forestry officials also noted that 2014 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of American holly (*Ilex opaca*) as Delaware's official state tree in 1939. At the time, Delaware was known throughout the United States as the "[Land of Holly](#)" because it was a leading exporter of holly holiday wreaths.

The "Green Horizons Project" is a multi-year effort to save working forests from future development. A successful partnership between the State of Delaware, the [U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program](#), and nonprofit organizations including The Conservation Fund, the successful ten-year effort will culminate this year with the planned acquisition of 370 acres of Sussex County forestland at a total cost of \$1.35 million. To date, Green Horizons has permanently protected over 4,000 acres of forests – which provide the public with cleaner water, opportunities for recreation and hunting, and places for wildlife habitat and observation.

At the ceremony, Delmarva Power received the [Tree Line USA Award](#) for meeting standards set by the National Arbor Day Foundation. The company also donated 30 trees for tree planting events at schools of winning poster contest entrants, as well as community Arbor Day events for Delaware's Tree City USA communities.



From left, Michael Krzyzanowski, Delmarva Power's Vegetation Management for its New Castle Region, and Michael Casmay, Staff Forester, receive the Tree Line USA Award from Governor Markell.

## 2014 Arbor Day Poster Contest Winners

### NEW CASTLE COUNTY

Kindergarten: Isaiah Ngugi, Kathleen Wilbur Elementary, Bear

Grades 1 to 2: Jonathan Eppler, Jennie Smith Elementary, Newark

Grades 3 to 4: Maya Rigor, Christ the Teacher, Newark

Grade 5: Isabella Garber, Christ the Teacher, Newark

### KENT COUNTY

Kindergarten: Caden John Marx, Maj. George Welch Elementary, Dover

Grades 1 to 2: Holly Helsdon, Nellie H. Stokes Elementary, Dover

Grades 3 to 4: Taryn Martin, W.B. Simpson Elementary, Camden

Grade 5: Juan Velasquez, Benjamin Banneker Elementary, Milford

### SUSSEX COUNTY

Kindergarten: Tyler Hutt, Eagle's Nest Christian School, Milton

Grades 1 to 2: Samuel Winston, Winston Learning Academy,  
Milford

Grades 3 to 4: Rain Vasey, Watergirl Farm Academy, Lincoln

Grade 5: Stephen Venable, Honor Academy, Milford