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PRESS RELEASE

Schenectady Announces New Collaborative Tree Planting Initiative on Earth Day

New collaborative includes youth employment and skills training opportunities
Tree planting funding provided by National Grid after October 2020 storm

SCHENECTADY – On Earth Day, the City of Schenectady and Schenectady County announced a new collaborative tree planting initiative with Community Fathers, Inc., Schenectady Job Training Agency (SJTA), and ReTree Schenectady. The initiative will create opportunities for youth employment, skills training, and workforce development while improving the City's green infrastructure.

The collaborative initiative kicked off on Earth Day in the Hamilton Hill neighborhood with a ceremonial tree planting event at the corner of Stanley Street and McClyman Street near the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School.

Community Fathers, Inc.'s program, Occupations Instead of Incarceration (OIOI), will be integral in connecting community needs to purposeful employment. Local MWBE's will be assisting with design, skills training, planting of trees and landscaping as part of this collaboration throughout the spring and summer months.

The City of Schenectady and Schenectady County received funding for tree restoration and planting through National Grid's Capital Tree Program and 10,000 Trees Program. After the October 2020 derecho, National Grid is providing support to restore trees in counties and cities most impacted by the storm.

"We are proud to kick off this tree planting initiative on Earth Day by working with community organizations to provide opportunities for our youth," said **Mayor Gary McCarthy**. "I thank National Grid for their support that will not only help our community rebuild but will have a lasting and viable impact on the health and vibrancy of our neighborhoods for years to come."

"This is just the first of many trees to be planted by the new partnership between Schenectady County, the City of Schenectady, Community Fathers, Inc., and ReTree Schenectady," said **Schenectady County Legislator Gary Hughes**. "Involving our youth in this project helps them engage and beautify their own community while learning valuable skills they can use now and in the future."

"Community Fathers Inc. and its newest program, OIOI (Occupations Instead of Incarceration) Learn to Earn Program, are excited to partner on this important urban health initiative that will empower our youth to grow our future," **Walter Simpkins** said. "Planting Trees is Planting Seeds; Growth for Tomorrow."

"Soon after National Grid crews did the tireless around-the-clock work to bring power back to our customers after the devastating October 7, 2020 Wind Storm, we asked if there was anything else we could do," said **National Grid Regional Director Laurie Poltynski**. "This was a remarkable event that caused the unfortunate loss of natural resources like trees and other vegetation. We wanted to do something to help with the restoration effort beyond getting the lights back on. We came up with the Capital Tree Program which is providing \$240,000 to the Rensselaer, Albany and Schenectady county areas to help with tree restoration, planting and other restoration projects. \$80,000 of that funding will go to the City and County of Schenectady. Today, we are starting to put that money to use here at the Martin Luther King, Jr. School in Schenectady as we plant the first trees that are part of this program."

The City of Schenectady has also received an Urban Forestry Grant for \$61,200 from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for a city-wide tree inventory and tree management plan. This will assist in improving the urban forest with comprehensive planning to identify and assess existing trees along with planting sites.

“Urban trees play critical roles in combatting air pollution, cleaning and utilizing stormwater, reducing the heat island effect and improving mental health,” said **Kristin Diotte, Director of Planning and Development**. “We're excited for this opportunity to work with community organizations and youth to rebuild our city's urban canopy and improve residents' quality of life.”