



NATIONAL FFA CONVENTION  
October 22-25, 2008

National FFA Organization  
6060 FFA Drive  
P.O. Box 68960  
Indianapolis, IN 46278-1370

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[www.ffa.org](http://www.ffa.org)

## Serving Indianapolis—One Tree at a Time

By Sarah Jackson

**INDIANAPOLIS** – On the other side of Indianapolis, away from the Indiana Convention Center and Conseco Fieldhouse, a group of FFA students are making a lasting impact in the community. The National Days of Service promotes civic engagement through agricultural education, service learning and FFA member participation. This year, chapters could choose from 12 different sites to participate in service learning activities.

Braving the cold and wind, thirty members from the he Seneca FFA Chapter from Illinois planted trees and helped Indy Parks and Recreation remove invasive honeysuckle species in Ellenberger Park.

The members split up into several groups around the park, where some were involved with tearing out honeysuckle and others planted trees. Urban forester Lindsey Purcell with Indy Parks and Rec said that honeysuckle emits a chemical that kills other plants around it, so no undergrowth grows near honeysuckle.

Along with providing shade, planting trees reduces erosion and helps produce oxygen, said Jeff Ward, environmental education administrator for Indy Parks and Rec. Ward said this year’s project is a combination of the 2006 and 2007 projects.

“There are 206 parks that Indy Parks and Rec is responsible for a total of 11,000 acres,” Ward said. “We’re glad for the help.” . He added that last year, FFA members planted more than 350 trees.

This week FFA members are having an immediate impact on the city, Ward said. .

“The volunteerism provided by FFA members this week adds up to \$10,000 worth of labor that we wouldn’t otherwise have,” Ward said. He said it’s a neat experience for members, too.

“If they (the members) come back to Indianapolis in future years, they can come back to the parks and see the trees that they planted,” he said. “The FFA members are hard-working and dedicated.”

This is the third year that Seneca FFA has participated in National Days of Service. Advisor Kent Weber said the chapter has returned year after year because the kids want to participate.

“It helps out in this community, and we can do it in our local community,” he said.

Kristin Pearson, Seneca FFA Chapter historian said, “A lot of communities don’t have a lot of volunteerism, so it’s good for all of us to come together and do this. It’s a lot of fun seeing what you can do.”

The FFA members enjoyed a visit from Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard. He told the members how much he and the city appreciate their day of service.

“Enjoy your day of service and enjoy the city,” Ballard said.

Toyota, Timberland and Coca-Cola sponsored today’s service project at Ellenberger Park as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.

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The National FFA Organization, formerly known as the Future Farmers of America, is a national youth organization of 507,763 student members – all preparing for leadership and careers in the science, business and technology of agriculture – as part of 7,439 local FFA chapters in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The National FFA Organization changed to its present name in 1988, in recognition of the growth and diversity of agriculture and agricultural education. The FFA mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education. Visit [www.ffa.org](http://www.ffa.org) for more information.

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