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Service members and civilians plant new trees

By Sgt. Jennifer Spradlin/19th Public Affairs Detachment

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Earth Day, a day devoted to volunteerism and environmental consciousness, has been observed every April 22 since 1970 and according to the Earth Day Network, more than one billion people in 192 countries participate annually.

JBLM hosted a weeklong series of events which supported the responsible stewardship of the base and aimed to educate the community on everyday changes which can make a difference in the preservation of the Northwest's natural beauty.

Civilian and service member volunteers planted seven new trees April 17. Three trees were planted at the John D. "Bud" Hawk Education Center on Lewis North and four trees were planted at the McChord Child Development Center. "Earth Day is the one time of the year when people tend to really focus on the environment, and when we do stuff like this, I kind of want to show them how easy it is, and how you can do it every day and not just once a year," said Miriam Easley, JBLM sustainability outreach coordinator. "The trees are beautiful, but the trees also provide a lot of economical and structural benefit. They provide shade which helps cool the building off. The roots provide help with soil erosion. So, there are a lot (of) great reasons to plant the trees."



Sgt. Jennifer Spradlin
A group of volunteers put the finishing touches on a newly planted tree at the John D. "Bud" Hawk Education Center at JBLM.

Many Soldiers from the 508th Military Police Battalion showed up to support the tree planting at the Hawk Education Center. Among them, Sgt. 1st Class Scott Swieda, who said the event was a perfect way to give back. "Our battalion is very environmentally conscious and dedicated to supporting JBLM. As much as we utilize the facilities, it's always nice to come out and improve the areas where we live and work," said Swieda. "Opportunities like these remind us, 'hey, this is where we live, let's make this place nice, we need to have a sense of pride.' Soldiers use the education center all day long and we want to make it inviting."

After approximately 20 years of service, Swieda also recognized the tree planting as a way to stimulate volunteerism among his Soldiers. He said volunteerism is important to him personally, and it is the duty of noncommissioned officers to set the standard for their Soldiers. He brought four of his Soldiers to help with the tree planting; although he said, they were happy to take a break from their duties to get their hands dirty.

"I think everybody loves to get outside. How great is it to be able to come out on a nice day and plant some trees, dig around in a garden or pick up trash from a beach?" Easley said. "I think anytime anybody can get a little closer to nature it makes them appreciate it more, and they'll want to take care of it a little bit better."

Easley said she was surprised and pleased by the turnout. "When these Soldiers drive by the trees they are going to know that they planted them and that's going to make them feel good."

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