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For Immediate Release
"ORCHARD To ORCHARD"

Photo Credit, Sharon Lee Harris. Article by Nate Hansen



SEDONA, Ariz. – Monday, March 10th,



Sedona students traveled to Hopi land near Third Mesa to plant 35 heirloom, Arkansas black, apple trees for an event associated with the second annual Hopi-Sedona Student Exchange. The event, appropriately named "Orchard to Orchard," brought students from two diverse cultures to one land where their work alongside one another quickly resembled the strength and confidence in the trees which they planted.

Historically, the Hopi reservation has a long history of apple and peach trees. They were brought to the mesas by the Spaniards and missionaries.

Consequently, Sedona's economic prosperity also began with orchards, over one hundred years ago.

Jerry Honawa, Hopi Elder, and Diane Dearmore, Director of The Institute of Ecotourism guided the planting of trees, all of which were donated by Jake Weber of IGA Weber's grocery in the Village of Oak Creek. Weber started Sedona's "Hometown Proud Apple Tree Program" with the purpose of bringing back Sedona's history to the youth and providing a means of fundraising for area schools. In addition to the heirloom trees, Biddle's Outdoor Center generously donated 15 bags of organic compost, nutrients, mulch and buckets for planting.



"This planting was about celebrating the ways we are alike. Together, we put our hands into the earth to help birth a new generation of culture sensitive and eco-responsible citizens," said Dearmore. "May these trees blossom with life and be enjoyed by many people for many years."

"A bit of Sedona was planted at Hopi," participant Lisa Grondin added.



On site, the bare root trees were carefully planted after nourishing them with vitamins placed in water then were tenderly placed in Hopi earth with enough organic soil to make the transition more comfortable. Shredded red wood cedar was placed around the planted tree as mulch to help retain water and ward off pests. As a final touch, local rabbit brush was collected and placed at the base of the trees to further deter creatures from nibbling the trees and added wind protection.



When asked what the most meaningful moment of the experience was, Lauren Remy, fourth grade student at West Sedona Elementary, smiled. "Jerry Honawa taught us how to carefully plant the tree with a warm heart and how to bless the tree by placing our hands on its trunk and moving them up the tree to the sky."

Honawa could only grin back, trying to maintain composure while wanting to exclaim his excitement for the cultural exchange. It's a step in the right direction, he said.



"Bringing these beautiful trees was a good learning experience for everyone. The enthusiasm and the willingness to participate showed the following morning when I returned to water and sing to the trees," said Honawa. "The trees were happy."



Sitting intermingled among one another after a long day's work, students proved how easy it was to extend our proverbial branches, embrace our roots, and truly grow as human beings. Like the newly formed orchard at Hopi land, standing steadfast and proud, both Sedona and Hopi children grounded themselves more than ever, side by side, heart to heart.

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