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## Maryland Bar Bulletin

[Publications](#) : [Bar Bulletin](#) : [October 2009](#)



### Attorneys Team Up to Plant A Million Trees

*By Bryan Nichols*



*Bill Kinsey (in hat, left) from Portland, Oregon, and other ABA Environmental, Energy and Resources Section members planted 13 trees at a west Baltimore school to officially start the ABA's One Million Trees Project*

When asked about the prospect of a million trees being planted in America over the next five years, Alice Ewen Walker of the Alliance for Community Trees (ACT) paused for a moment before saying, "It's a big goal, but achievable. It all starts with a goal."

And that goal for the American Bar Association's One Million Trees Project started modestly in west Baltimore on September 23, 2009. A group of attorneys joined students at Franklin Square Elementary/Middle School and planted 13 trees. The event kicked off the three-day ABA Environmental, Energy and Resources Fall Meeting, also in Baltimore. The nationwide total is tallied on the Section's website.

Developed by the ABA Section and expanded nationwide with its partner ACT, this arboretum project is new to the ABA, but not exactly novel.

Million Tree Projects have respectively sprouted in New York City and Los Angeles. The 4-H Youth Development Program asked its six million youth members to plant a million trees across the U.S. and Canada. And, according to their website, over seven billion trees have been planted in the United Nations' Billion Tree Campaign.

What is unique about the ABA's program is the onus on attorney participation.

Jurists from Oregon, Indiana, Washington, D.C., and other states sowed a dozen October Glory Red Maples and one River Branch tree throughout the school's property, which comprises the entire 200 block of North Stricker Street. The trees are all indigenous to the region and help replenish the depleted green fields in Maryland's largest urban area.

"They aren't much now," Jeff Barrett, a worker for Parks & People Foundation, who organized the



*An October Glory Red Maple ("Acer Rubrum") planted on September 23, outside of Franklin Square School's parking lot on the sidewalk of West Lexington Street.*

Baltimore planting, said of the 13 trees that each started the morning in black, knee-high drums, "but in 15 to 20 years, they should be 60 feet in the air."

From trunks that are as skinny as a wrist, these red maples are able to grow and reach the crowns of Baltimore's storied townhouses. Yet the tree population is sparse in the city.

Today, only 20 percent of Baltimore is under tree cover, while another 52 percent of the land, according to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Forest Service, is available for tree cover. City and State officials started a movement to double the tree canopy in all of Maryland's urban areas by 2036. Various incentives, events and cash reimbursements are offered through state and non-profit organizations to get people planting trees. But ABA member Nancye Bethurem doesn't need these gimmicks.

"This is an opportunity to participate hands-on and to contribute to the city," said Bethurem, wearing a black Hawaii State Bar Association t-shirt and pulling weeds from the Franklin Square School's main garden. She recently mailed ten tree seedlings from her South Carolina home to her son in Missouri. "You can do this anywhere."

And Franklin Square School is the perfect example. The school, said Parks & People's Community Director Guy Hager, was constructed in the same style that many big city school yards were in the 1960s and '70s, meaning the school's city-block property was devoid of grass or green space so to keep maintenance costs down. About six years ago, Parks & People began excavating an acre of the asphalt slab in the property's northwest corner to grow a grass lawn. Now the lawn has a reading circle and a garden with Black-Eyed Susans and other perennials.

"This is something positive," Hester Johnson, the lead teacher for Franklin Square's after school program, Kids Grow, said about the ABA tree planting. Parks & People founded the Kids Grow program, which is an environmental-focused course that teaches students to care for the environment. Each year, 60 Franklin Square students learn by maintaining the school's lawn. They water, weed, garden, and preserve it as best they can.

"The kids don't let dogs run through here," continued Johnson, whose class of pre-teens toiled under the hot sun alongside the middle-aged attorneys on September 23.

"It's exciting to have attorneys come out and help make Baltimore a more beautiful place," Maggie Tindall, a member of MSBA's Environmental Law Section, said at the September 23 tree planting. "We've come to recognize more recently the value of green spaces. You know plants filter water runoff – it's all a really positive thing."

Not only is water filtered through the trees, but carbon is similarly sponged from the air. Temperatures can also be controlled through trees. Heat islands form in cities when natural green spaces are replaced by buildings and roads. These infrastructures, which characterize urban areas, absorb sunlight and then release it back as heat. Trees, meanwhile, intercept the sunlight light and keep temperatures cooler.

At the ABA planting, Lee Paddock, the Associate Dean for Environmental Law at George Washington Law School, wore the effects of the heat like a tree wears its bark.

"This is enjoyable work," maintained Paddock, an ABA member, after planting trees. Sweat, meanwhile, soaked through his blue, Law School polo shirt and slicked his forearms, sealing clumps of dirt and mulch below the shirt's short sleeves. "It's a



*Workers try to dislodge the first of a dozen Red Maples planted at Franklin Square.*

wonderful way to get away from desk duties.”

The work of these volunteer attorneys will not only help the next generation, but through the ABA’s ambitious goal of a million trees in five years, will also help this generation.

“It’s great,” said Amanda Neidert, a member of MSBA’s Environmental Law Section, “especially when it’s in your own back yard.”

[← previous](#)

[next →](#)

[Publications : Bar Bulletin: October 2009](#)

[BACK TO TOP ↑](#)

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