

District Awards A \$2000 Grant For An Urban Heat Island Tree Planting in Allentown

According to a New York Times article written August 9, 2019, temperatures in a city can span a range of as much as 20 degrees depending upon one's location. Students from Building 21 Public High School in Allentown have been working on finding solutions to this "hot topic" known as urban heat islands, for the last two years!

Heat islands are paved surfaces such as parking lots, sidewalks and rooftops. These areas reflect and magnify heat rather than absorbing and lowering temperatures as forested and green urban areas do. A tree-lined neighborhood can be up to 10 degrees cooler than one without trees and this certainly makes a difference on a 90-degree summer day. Studies have shown that elderly populations and those with asthma suffer most from urban heat. With climate change on the rise, heat islands will continue to impart potentially deadly health and environmental risks in both business and residential neighborhoods.

To address this environmental concern, several creative students at Building 21 entered a proposal contest in the spring of 2017 to devise solutions to combat effects of heat island warming. After presentations were made to a panel of Allentown-affiliated organizations including Lehigh University, Lehigh County Conservation District, and PPL. Ninth grader, Maribel Rabio won the contest. She proposed planting three large groups of flowering trees to add shade and natural beauty to her school's parking areas. After volunteering to help students with the first phase of Maribel's tree plantings, several LCCD staff members encouraged the school to apply to the District's grant program for funding of phase two.

Upon board approval for a \$2000 grant from Lehigh County Conservation District, Building 21's Urban Agriculture Class, Allentown Department of Public Works, and City Arborist, Rick Howell worked together on a Friday in early October to carry out stage two of the project. On this day, six native redbuds and five native dogwoods joined Building 21's ever-growing and greening landscape and brought Maribel's great idea one step closer to completion. LCCD thanks all of its partners and Maribel for this fantastic conservation stewardship effort.

To see WFMZ 69's coverage of highlights from the day, please visit:

https://www.wfmz.com/video/students-plant-trees-outside-allentown-s-building/video_3f596547-5eb8-5650-a2e9-1e8e9a6776fd.html