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Georgia farm works to re-establish the American Chestnut tree

By Caryn Grant | Macon Telegraph

BULLARD -- Moments after planting a group of young trees behind his Charlane Plantation home, Chuck Leavell was already thinking of future generations of another kind of tree -- his family tree.

"It's my vision that our grandchildren will bring their children out here and play up underneath these chestnut trees, and hopefully many, many more that we'll plant in the years to come," the Rolling Stones keyboard player said Tuesday.

The four American chestnut trees, donated by The American Chestnut Foundation, were planted at the home of Leavell and his wife, Rose Lane, as part of a tree demonstration site to develop an American chestnut tree resistant to disease that nearly wiped out the species decades ago.

"We depend on forests for air, clean water, wood products. We are absolutely dependent on those trees," said Bryan Burhans, president and CEO of the American Chestnut Foundation, who attended Tuesday's tree planting. "Although we have good healthy forests and we're sustainably managing our forests now, there's still a lot of forest health issues that we're facing."

Many of those issues stem from the introduction of non-native exotics, he said. The chestnut blight and ink disease are both examples of problems that were brought in from other countries, eventually causing harm to plants native to the United States.

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