



THE
AMERICAN
CHESTNUT
FOUNDATION®

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Elderhostel group returns to Virginia for 13th year to help restore the American chestnut

Abingdon, VA – The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) has teamed up with Elderhostel in its ongoing effort to restore the American chestnut tree to its native eastern forests. Elderhostel is America's first and the world's largest educational travel organization for adults 55 and over. The project runs May 30-June 6 at TACF's research farms in Meadowview, VA under the direction of Ms. Sam Fisher of Abingdon's 4-H Center and TACF's scientist Dr. Fred Hebard.

The Elderhostel group will learn about the American chestnut tree and the research being done to restore this mighty giant. Once one of the most important trees in eastern hardwood forests, the American chestnut was destroyed by blight. TACF advocates a multiple attack on the blight by encouraging research in biological control and actively breeding trees for disease resistance.

The group will assist in this process by performing disease inoculations of existing trees located at TACF's Meadowview Research Farms. They are expected to inoculate approximately 500 trees during their stay. Now in its 13th year, this partnership has brought more than 100 Elderhostel members to the epicenter of TACF's national breeding program.

Members from as far away as Colorado and Michigan travel to this corner of Virginia to join in TACF's national effort to restore this mighty giant by inoculating the trees each June. Sylvia Stack of Kirkwood, Pennsylvania has been coming to Meadowview regularly since Elderhostel program in chestnut restoration in 1997. Each year, Sylvia has travelled more than 900 miles roundtrip to take part in an experiment that will one day result in a blight-resistant American chestnut tree.

"I just wanted to do something to help bring back this beautiful tree. The American chestnut was such a big part of American culture that it would be a shame to see it gone forever," said Sylvia who is a long-

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time member of TACF. “The American Chestnut Foundation is doing great work here and we appreciate the fact that we’re able to take part in the scientific process,” she said.

Dr. Hebard said, “Members of Elderhostel are an important part of this process and we look forward to the enthusiasm and excitement they bring to our research farms each year.”

The inoculation process involves preparing sections of the fungus that causes chestnut blight, inserting them into the tree and then in several weeks, viewing how strongly the blight attacks the tree. Often, trees are given two inoculations – one that is a more potent strain of the fungus and the other, a milder version.

About TACF

The American Chestnut Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization headquartered in Asheville, NC. It has nearly 6,000 members and chapters in 17 states. TACF was established in 1983 with the sole purpose of restoring this majestic tree to its native forests in the eastern United States, and the Foundation has supported the efforts of scientists who are working to develop a blight-resistant American chestnut. For more information about the Foundation, please visit our website at www.acf.org.

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