

With the recent central coast fires and nationwide "Green Trend," how can Santa Maria Valley residents help the local environment and contribute to the community? By planting a tree of course, and participating in the Spring/Summer "Tree of Life" program!

The City of Santa Maria's "Tree of Life" program has been "growing" in the Santa Maria Valley since 1993. Founded by Patty Ellis of the Recreation & Parks Department, this program offers an inexpensive lifetime gift to individuals, community organizations, families and businesses. Ellis still runs the program and hopes that it will continue to grow upon her retirement. Ellis handles everything from tree archiving to the planting process and has had a hand in planting more than 560 trees to date! Ellis points out that trees make great birthday, anniversary, community, church, memorial and business gifts. An informative brochure Ellis created outlines the many tree varieties available to the community and the parks available in which to plant them.

The "Tree of Life" program was recently showcased at the Santa Maria Earth Day celebration where locals were educated on tree adoption and given seed packets and green planting kits.

The first "Tree of Life" tree was planted in memory of former Recreation and Parks Department Director Mike Maramonte's father, Steve. It was a Coastal Live Oak planted at Maramonte Park and was donated by former Recreation and Parks Commissioner, Joe Hagerman, who passed away last year. Ironically, Hagerman also purchased a redwood tree for his deceased wife, Jean, a few years prior. The tree was planted at Hagerman Sport Complex. Today, there is a redwood grove called "Jean's Grove" with about 33 trees.

Trees can also be purchased by groups, families and businesses to honor a special event. Local resident, Jason Davie, purchased 3 Horsechestnut trees for the Santa Maria High School Class of 1987 20 year Class Reunion. The trees are planted at Preisker Park.

This Spring through the Summer, "The Tree of Life" program is launching a new tree planting campaign to inform City of Santa Maria residents, families, schools and groups of a local, homegrown and affordable way to help the environment. This program is sponsored by P.L.A.Y. Inc. (People for Leisure and Youth) and the City of Santa Maria's Recreation and Parks Department.

Trees prices range from \$100.00 for a 15 gallon tree to \$200.00 for a 24" box tree. Bronze plaques measuring 4" x 6" can also be purchased to commemorate each tree. An added bonus is that this tree planting program is also a tax deductible donation. The campaign kicks off in June and runs through August and offers environmental awards, website recognition and gift certificate awards.

1st business/organization or individual to purchase **5** trees receives a P.L.A.Y. Inc. Environmental Achievement Award. This includes an award certificate and mention on the P.L.A.Y. Inc. website.

1st business/organization or individual to purchase **10** trees receives a P.L.A.Y. Inc. Environmental Achievement Award. This includes an award certificate, mention on the P.L.A.Y. Inc. website and a local related gift certificate from a community business.

1st business/organization or individual to purchase **20** trees receives a P.L.A.Y. Inc. Environmental Achievement Award. This includes an award certificate, mention on the P.L.A.Y. Inc. website, a local related gift certificate from a community business and an article in a local publication.

Whether community members are interested in planting just 1 tree or competing in the Spring/Summer campaign, ongoing support is needed. For more information on "The Tree of Life" Program, please contact Patty Ellis at the Santa Maria Recreation and Park's Department, (805) 925-0951, ext. 346.