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Virginia Department of Energy Celebrates 150th Anniversary of Arbor Day

NORTON, VA- Nearly 200 Wise County ninth graders planted over 1,000 trees at the 16th annual Virginia Arbor Day celebration. This is the 150th anniversary of the first Arbor Day celebration that took place in Nebraska. Students planted trees on a former coal surface mine in Norton called Project Intersection. It is now under development to make way for new industries in Wise County in part due to funding from Virginia Energy's Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) program.

The event teaches students about the importance of environmental protection during and after coal mining. It also emphasizes the important role trees play in our daily lives. Students and volunteers planted apple, dogwood, black locust, red maple, southern red oak, white oak, persimmon and pine trees on three acres.

Since Virginia's Arbor Day celebration began in 2005 over 10,000 trees have been planted on nearly 40 acres of mined land. Project Intersection is located where US Highways 58 Alternate and 23 meet. The total development is over 100 acres and was a surface coal mine in the 1960's. Virginia Energy's AMLER program has aided in the reclamation and development of this site. Over \$9.2 million in grant funds has been awarded to the Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority to turn the former coal mine into an industrial development site. The trees planted today will neighbor a new home for an Earthlink customer service center.

Virginia Energy is grateful for community and agency partners that joined us to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of Arbor Day. They include: the city of Norton, Lonesome Pine RIFA, the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Virginia Department of Forestry, the Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement and Earthlink.

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