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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – MAY 2, 2025

100 Highschoolers Plant 750 Trees at Virginia Energy's 19th Annual Arbor Day Event

RICHMOND, VA— The Virginia Department of Energy (Virginia Energy) hosted its 19th annual Virginia Arbor Day celebration in Russell County, where more than 100 ninth-grade students helped transform a former mining property by planting over 750 trees as part of the Commonwealth's ongoing commitment to revitalize coal communities through environmental stewardship and economic development.

"This celebration represents our commitment to building on Southwest Virginia's rich energy history while positioning the region to lead in environmental innovation," said Virginia Energy Director Glenn Davis. "We're investing in both the land and the next generation of environmental stewards, creating pathways for economic growth in communities that have powered our Commonwealth for generations."

The tree-planting project, held on reclaimed mine land now managed by The Nature Conservancy, has restored more than 45 acres with over 13,000 trees since its inception in 2005. This year's planting included economically valuable hardwoods like red and white oak, maple, and locust, along with fruit-bearing species such as persimmon and apple that support wildlife habitat and future recreational opportunities.

Beyond environmental restoration, the event provided critical workforce development opportunities for local students. Interactive educational stations included demonstrations of solar and wind energy technologies, surface mining models, emergency response equipment from Virginia Energy's mine rescue team, and hands-on experience with Virginia Department of Transportation equipment.

Practical education opportunities like this support Virginia Energy's efforts to create pathways to high-quality jobs while honoring the region's mining heritage. The initiative also advances goals of the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative, which is dedicated to restoring forests on coal-mined lands throughout the Eastern United States.

Virginia Energy partnered with numerous public and private organizations for this celebration, including the Metallurgical Coal Producers Association (MCPA), The Nature Conservancy, Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement (OSMRE), Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF), Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (VDWR), Dominion Energy, Russell County Reclamation, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Enervest, Virginia Clean Cities, and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

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