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MEDINA: Oak Orchard students celebrate Arbor Day with song and dance

By Miranda Vagg



EARTH SONGS: Maureen Hungerford's third grade class sings the closing song "Sing for Earth Everyday" during the Arbor Day celebration at Oak Orchard Elementary.

The auditorium at Oak Orchard Elementary was filled with the excited chatter of children Friday afternoon as they eagerly awaited the annual Arbor Day celebration.

The festivities were moved to the school after thunderclouds threatened to rain down on the celebration at its scheduled location, the Bank of Castile on South Main Street. The bank is the first and only corporate sponsor for Arbor Day in Medina.

With a full program, including songs and a re-enactment skit based on a poem, the children were welcomed by Chairman of the Municipal Tree Board Christopher Busch who shared some of the history of Arbor Day. Friday was the 136th national anniversary of Arbor Day and it is a celebration that has grown to encompass the world, he said.

"In Korea, they have a tree loving week," Busch said.

He also shared some interesting facts about Arbor Day history, like how schools in New York state were required by law in 1889 to observe the day. Though it is no longer the law, "we do it anyway because it's good to do," Busch said.

Though officials spoke, the children truly shined as third, fourth and fifth grade classes took the stage to rap, sing songs and recite poems about being environmentally friendly. They also said the Earth Pledge, a play on the words in the Pledge of Allegiance that also promoted eco-friendliness, and children from Kathie Valley's class re-enacted a poem depicting how a tree that is saved from being cut down will drop seeds that grow another tree.

The growing and planting of trees is also what Busch and the Municipal Tree Board promote. In the last week, the Village of Medina Department of Public Works and members of the tree board have planted 14 trees along West Avenue and will be putting several more in in the coming weeks, he said.

"There are not little elves and fairies that come and dig the holes in the middle of the night," Busch told the children, adding that it is the village's own DPW who work to ensure the plantings in the municipal forest.

Each of the trees planted have a green and yellow sign with them noting that they were Arbor Day plantings. This year a few *Parrotia persica* — the Latin name for the Persian Ironwood Tree — have been planted. According to Busch, they are one of the most beautiful trees in autumn with its foliage turning rich crimson, yellow and orange. They are also one of the first trees to blossom in the spring with tiny half-inch red flowers in March.

Medina Mayor Adam Tabelski also spoke to the children and proclaimed the last Friday in April as Arbor Day.



ACTING FOR ARBOR DAY Students at Oak Orchard School perform as part of Medina's Arbor Day celebration.

"I've only been mayor a few weeks, but it wasn't long ago I remember sitting where you are," he said. "As time goes on, those trees are going to get bigger and you're going to get bigger."

According to Tabelski, when the children are older they will look back and remember how they helped with celebrating Arbor Day.

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"These guys are the guys who run the village and they are very committed," Busch said to the children in regard to the village board.

The tree board meets regularly to discuss tree planting projects in the Village of Medina.