

Aurora-King 12U Jays Flock to Budweth Park to plant trees in display of service, unity



Sunday afternoon's tree-planting initiative at chilly Budweth Park, co-sponsored by LEAF (Local Enhancement & Appreciation of Forests) and King Township, was a tremendous success as 500 native trees and shrubs were added to York Region's urban canopy.

Among the courageous planting crews who braved the wintry April conditions was a flock of civic-minded Aurora-King 12U Blue Jays who took a break from spring training to participate in Earth Week activities in Nobleton.

Aurora-King 12U Head Coach Glen Nerona took a brief respite from the rigors of tree-planting and stressed the vital importance of community service for his young charges: "We're here to serve our communities of King and Aurora. This is also an important team-building event to get the guys together off the baseball diamond before the season begins. We want our players to build team unity and be dedicated to service."

The amiable coach discussed the most important lesson to be derived from Sunday afternoon's Earth Week event.

"It's really important that they give back to the communities through these activities."

The engaging baseball coach and dedicated classroom teacher stressed the significance of skills that connect to both baseball and life outside the ballpark: "The kids are as focused and disciplined in planting trees today as they are during our activities in our winter facility and on the diamond. We insist that they conduct themselves this way on and off the field."

The focus and discipline to which Coach Nerona referred were evident as the group of 12 ballplayers, bedecked in their light blue Aurora-King Jays hoodies as an expression of team unity, assembled distinctively on the northern sector of Budweth Park, listened intently to the instructions of their LEAF arborist, and worked diligently at their digging, planting, and mulching tasks.

It was inspirational to witness this group of civic-minded teenagers improving the urban forest canopy of Nobleton for generations to come. According to Nerona and his coaching staff, the lessons off the baseball diamond will contribute to their success on the diamond.

?Our season starts in May and we've been working out at the Hallmark Facility for months. For today, our goal is to plant one hundred trees and shrubs.?

The 12U team's lofty arboreal aim was well on the way to fruition as units of three Jays descended on the prepped lands to plant the native shrubs and trees provided by LEAF and the Township of King including balsam fir, eastern white cedar, white pine, white spruce, basswood, black cherry, bur oak, hackberry, paper birch, red oak, silver maple, sugar maple, trembling aspen, American hazelnut, black chokeberry, common ninebark, elderberry, fragrant sumac, grey dogwood, highbush cranberry, nannyberry, pussy willow, red osier dogwood, serviceberry, and snowberry.

With this flock of fledgling Blue Jays caring for the diverse urban canopy of Bedweth Park, the future looked that much brighter on a late-April afternoon.

By Jim Stewart