

# **OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD, AND FORESTRY**

2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard

Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4912

## **PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 18, 2016

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Michelle Finch-Walker, 580-236-1021, michelle.finch@ag.ok.gov

### **Oklahoma Forestry Services celebrates Arbor Week**

Oklahoma Forestry Services is gearing up for Arbor Week with a kickoff celebration for communities, universities and utility companies that have committed to properly managing their public trees and by launching a tree tag campaign to showcase the benefits of trees.

A luncheon and tree planting was hosted by Oklahoma Forestry Services and Oklahoma Urban and Community Forestry Council on March 16 in Oklahoma City to recognize 24 communities that have earned “Tree Cities USA” designation, five utility companies that have “Tree Line USA” designations and six colleges and universities across the state that have achieved “Tree Campus USA” designations. These organizations earned their titles by demonstrating commitment to tree care standards and best practices determined by the Arbor Day Foundation.

“It’s so exciting to see communities, schools and utility companies in our state work hard to care for trees and improve their environments,” said George Geissler, Oklahoma State Forester. “We celebrate their commitment and hope they serve as an inspiration for others.”

Also recognized at the celebration were the finalists of the third, fourth and fifth grade Arbor Week Poster Contest. Finalists included first place winner, Chloe Kasterke, North Rock Creek School in Shawnee; second place winner, Artiol Seji, Whitebead Elementary in Pauls Valley and third place winner, Brandon Fuentes, Taft Elementary in Enid.

In addition to being honored, each organization was provided tree tags to hang on trees in their areas during Oklahoma’s Arbor Week, March 20 – 26. The colorful tags are being hung on trees to bring attention to the many benefits that trees provide beyond beautification, including clean air, water quality, energy savings and financial benefits. The public will be able to see the tags on trees at the Myriad Botanical Gardens in Oklahoma City and are encouraged to look for them in Tree City USA communities and Tree Campus USA campuses across the state.

(MORE)

“We encourage everyone to find a way to celebrate Arbor Week,” said Jim Reese, Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture. “Whether it’s getting involved in a community project or simply planting a tree in your own yard, Arbor Week is the perfect time to take that step.”

Join us by celebrating Arbor Week and sharing your story on social media using the hashtag #OKArborDay.

For more information about Oklahoma’s Arbor Week or to print tree tags, visit [www.forestry.ok.gov](http://www.forestry.ok.gov). For information about becoming a Tree City USA, Tree Line USA or Tree Campus USA, visit [www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org).

###

### **About Oklahoma Forestry Services**

Oklahoma Forestry Services, a division of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, is committed to conserving, enhancing and protecting Oklahoma’s 12.5 million acres of forests and woodlands. Since 1925, Oklahoma Forestry Services has worked with individuals and communities throughout the state to create resilient landscapes, fire-adaptive communities and provide wildfire response. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, the division also has regional offices in Goldsby, Broken Bow, Wilburton and Tahlequah. For more information, visit <http://www.forestry.ok.gov>.

### **Photo captions:**

Secretary Reese and poster winners: Okla. Secretary of Agriculture Jim Reese with Arbor Week poster contest winners, Artiol Seji, Chloe Kasterke and Brandon Fuentes.

Arbor Day group: Attendees at the Oklahoma Forestry Services’ and Oklahoma Urban and Community Forestry Council’s Arbor Week Kickoff Celebration.

Tree tag: Tree tags showcase the environmental benefits of trees.