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The Times Leader

BARK project takes root

By BETTY J. POKAS, Times Leader Area Editor

POET Joyce Kilmer undoubtedly would have approved of a project undertaken during the weekend near Barnesville.

Kilmer, who once wrote, "Poems are made by fools like me, but only God can make a tree," would have been in favor of the efforts of the Barnesville Area Reforestation Kommittee in cooperation with the Oxford Mining Co., some governmental agencies and volunteers in planting 4,000 seedlings in less than two hours on a strip-mined area.

"It went faster than we have ever done it before," said Marie Bundy of BARK in regard to the planting of saplings. "It was very easy to get the holes in the dirt."

She indicated this was because of the reclamation technique used by Oxford Mining to prepare the site for the planting.

This marks the first time that the technique, known as the Forestry Reclamation Approach, was used in Ohio, according to Bundy. This method has been successful in Kentucky, West Virginia and other states, and it was the first time in Ohio for a coal company to work in cooperation with a citizens' group, using this approach.

Although she described the ground as really rough with piles of dirt and stone, it was very easy to plant in. "It was really loose so the plants will have a good chance to grow," the BARK member added.

The Barnesville Kiwanis Club provided lunch for the workers. Planting tools were provided with instructions given by a representative of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Also involved with the project was the Belmont Soil and Water Conservation District.

About 20,000 seedlings have been planted since BARK began the project four years ago.

Bundy said the group's endeavors to some extent possibly were spurred

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by the “Green Belt” proposal once advocated in Barnesville, and then there were “some of us who just wanted to do something specific to bring back the trees.”

More than 200 individuals worked on this year's project. In addition to BARK members, representatives from the governor's office and Jeff Emmons of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, planters included organizations such as 4-H clubs, Future Farmers of America, Boy Scouts, members of the First Christian Church and 47 persons from the Olney Friends School.

“Hopefully, this year, we'll have a much better survival rate (of the saplings),” Bundy said. She added that the survival rate is expected to be much better because of the new process.

Goals related to the new technique are to plant more high-value hardwood trees on reclaimed coal-mined lands in Appalachia and to increase the survival rates and growth rates of planted trees.

The trees this year were planted in an area halfway between Leatherwood Road and the road leading to Fairview from West Main Street in Barnesville.

“Everybody feels good about it (planting the saplings),” said Bundy. It's a real festive atmosphere — people feel like they've done something worthwhile.”

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