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LSUA celebrates Arbor Day; honors local attorney

BY KARINA DONICA • KDONICA@THETOWNTALK.COM • JANUARY 17, 2009

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A university's identity may be defined by a historic landmark, such as a unique architectural building or a memorial tower at the center of the campus life.

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But at Louisiana State University at Alexandria, that landmark is blossoming live oak trees dotting the landscape.

That was the summation of several campus officials on Friday during the annual Arbor Day observance.

"The impact it has on families, the impact it has on communities and the impact that these trees have on the life of an institution, whether it's a university or not, is immeasurable," said LSUA Chancellor David Manuel while standing next to a 75-year-old live oak tree.

That tree was dedicated to local attorney Charles S. Weems, a member of the LSUA Foundation board of directors and former member of the LSU board of supervisors. Weems, who is credited with being instrumental in helping the university become a four-year institution, thanked the crowd for celebrating the life of trees.

"I want to thank all of you who have come out on this beautiful but cold early afternoon for a special event, not for me, but to recognize what's special about LSU at Alexandria," Weems said.

Weems metaphorically compared the branches of an oak tree spreading to protect the ground beneath to higher education spreading over the community.

Traditionally on Arbor Day, the university plants more trees of different varieties. This year, 27 more trees will be planted.

Previously, trees have been dedicated to Howard Mulder, Roy O. and Vinita Martin, William F. "Bill" Cotton, Martin Woodin and Robert Cavanaugh.

Since 2004, the university has planted 136 trees on Arbor Day, including live oaks, red maples, cypress, southern magnolias and other varieties, said David Wesse, vice chancellor for finance and administration.

John Barnett with the LSU AgCenter, Bob Thibodaux with Bob's Tree Service and Margaret Waring with Waring Braun Landscape Architects also spoke

about the significance of trees in Louisiana.

Arbor Day is a special day because it gives people an opportunity to remember the importance of trees, Barnett said.

Trees represent the number one industry in Louisiana with more than \$4 billion of income through timberland, and products produced in mills, he said.



Charlie Weems receives a plaque from Louisiana State University at Alexandria Chancellor David Manuel on Friday. Weems was honored on Arbor Day with a tree planted on the campus.

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