

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

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SMS STUDENTS SHARE THEIR SERVICE-LEARNING EXPERIENCES AT STATEWIDE MEETING



Teacher Emily Smith and her former students stand next to one of the trees planted on the SMS campus as a part of their Tree Ambassador Service-Learning project

CENTREVILLE, MD - At the October 2026 MSDE Service-Learning Coordinators' meeting, seven students from Sudlersville Middle School, 5th grade teacher Emily Smith, and school counselor Kelsey Aburn, shared their experiences participating in the Tree Ambassador Service-Learning project. In that meeting, Austin Bennett, Savannah Gott, Marleny Juan Lopez, Jaxon Lloyd, John McNamara, Brielle Matus, and Morgan Rochester shared how the project connected to what they were learning in class, what they learned about themselves and their leadership skills, and how they could take their learning from this project and apply it to the wider community.

The Tree Ambassador Service-Learning project started with representatives from ShoreRivers presenting a lesson on the importance of trees and how they help prevent pollution through runoff as well leading as a schoolyard search for areas that needed more trees to help with runoff pollution. Students then learned about the different types of trees and the connection between trees and clean water. The students also learned about the cultural and ecological importance of marshes and how trees help maintain that ecosystem on a trip to SERC- The Smithsonian Environmental Research Center. The students created "Tree Ambassador" posters sharing their new found knowledge and displayed them throughout the school and the Sudlersville community. Finally, the students planted trees on the school campus to help improve the environment.

Service-learning is a high-impact instructional approach that combines meaningful service to the community with curriculum-based learning. It is a form of civic education that provides students with diverse opportunities to explore and reflect on what it means to be active, engaged citizens. All students in Queen Anne's County Public Schools are required to earn at least 75 Service-Learning hours to meet Maryland graduation requirements. For more information, please visit our website at <https://www.qacps.org/general-resources/service-learning/>.