

Planting trees a 'cool' idea

TORI STAFFORD
The Whig-Standard

Paul VandenEngel says it's all about the kids.

"They're the ones who will make the change in our world."

That's why VandenEngel, co-owner and operator of Western Landscape Services, is embarking on the fourth annual Plant a Tree, Make our City Cool program.

Working with 10 local elementary and secondary schools, Western Landscape gives presentations on the importance of trees in urban landscapes, and the benefits of having a tree canopy in the city.

The company brings one mature tree to plant at the school with children from Grade 6 classes. Those students in turn get a seedling of their own to take home and plant in the location of their choice.

"Their enthusiasm is just great," said VandenEngel, who goes by Pat Mocc — from Plant A Tree, Make Our City Cool — when presenting to Grade 6 students from both the Roman Catholic and public school boards.

"They're always happy to find out they get to take a seedling home," He said.

The seedlings, foot-tall white spruces, come with a set of planting instructions, but the students, having already taken part in planting the mature tree, get to walk their family and friends through the process.

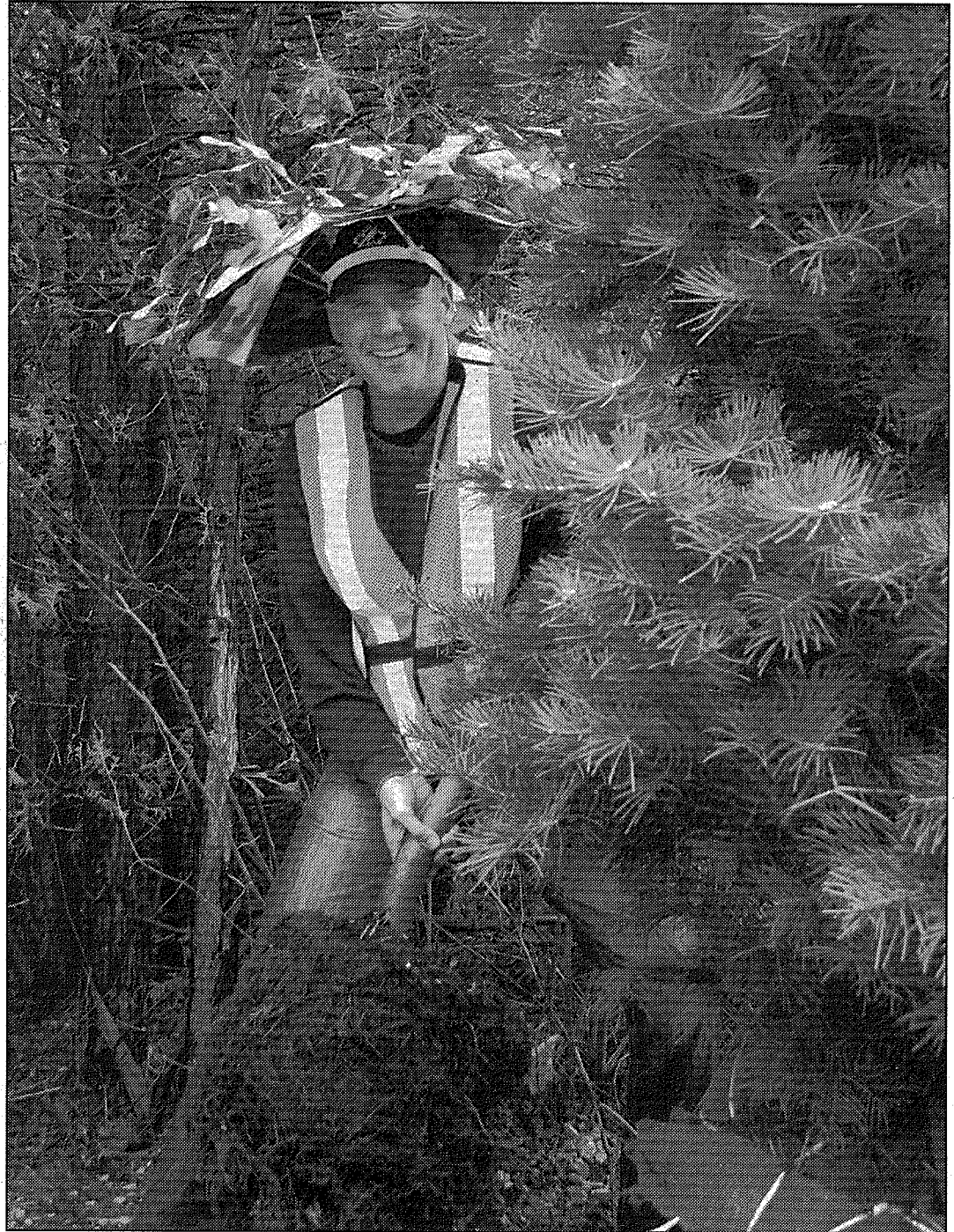
The best part, VandenEngel says, is it all adds to the tree canopy in Kingston.

"That's the main focus of our program — to teach the children why trees are important and why they are beneficial in an urban setting," said Carol VandenEngel, also with the family-owned company.

"Usually the teachers are quite interested, too, because they haven't heard all these great facts about trees before."

Last year alone, the program led to 380 trees being planted in and around Kingston. VandenEngel said this year the company hopes to distribute about 500 trees.

This year's planting will begin Friday, which is also National Arbor Day. Students from Georges Vanier Catholic School and St. Joseph Catholic School, both in Belleville, will take part in the



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Paul "Pat Mocc" VandenEngel, co-owner of Western Landscape Services, holds a mature tree like the ones he'll plant with area students as part of the Plant a Tree, Make our City Cool program beginning on Friday.

presentation and the planting of a mature at each school. The company tries to keep the program in the Kingston community, but these two Belleville school's expressed interest in the program last year, and were put on a waiting list.

The program will go to three schools in Kingston before school lets out for the summer, and then four another schools in the fall.

In addition, this year the program has teamed up with students of the Society for Conservation Biology at Queen's University to create butterfly gardens at Sydenham High School and Bath Public School, whose students won a sustainability competition.

The trees used in the program have been donated by Connon Nurseries in Trenton, and the

seedlings have been donated by the Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program.

"It's all about doing our part to help the planet, and making a better world for future generations," VandenEngel said.

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