

Chestermere tree-planting program celebrates newborns

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Chestermere's Birth Forest program allows local parents to plant a tree in recognition of their newborns. Photo submitted/For Rocky View Weekly.

New parents in Chestermere can plant a memento to the birth of their child while also helping the environment, thanks to the [Birth Forest tree-planting program](#).

The City of Chestermere has offered the program since 2005. Every fall, parents can pay for a tree that will be planted in recognition of their newborns.

"People get excited about it and it's a great event for families," said Alison Ciupa, a parks co-ordinator with the City of Chestermere.

"It's an evening in September, on National Tree Day, when families gather to plant trees for their children. They usually are for [children born that year], but sometimes that doesn't really line up with people's schedules."

This year, National Tree Day [falls on Sept. 23](#). Ciupa said the planting ceremony will take place that evening at 6:30 p.m. in a greenspace along the canal pathway just off Rainbow Road. Parking will be available by Rainbow Falls Gate.

"Planting trees is a huge benefit to the environment," Ciupa said. "Some of the benefits trees provide are cleaner air, soil stabilization, wildlife habitat, temperature moderation and that sort of thing."

The program also gives residents a sense of belonging to the community, she added.

According to Ciupa, the location of the Birth Forest changes every year.

“We have found the site along the canal pathway is quite a large area,” she said. “I think this is our third forest going there. They’re kind of all over the city.”

Chestermere’s Streetscape Committee – a volunteer group that receives funding from City council for local beautification initiatives – organizes the program.

“We definitely get a good turnout every year,” Ciupa said, adding 16 families took part in 2019. “We have to put a cap of 25 trees, because it’s a big undertaking to prepare the site ahead of time.”

Usually, small spruce trees or aspens are planted, Ciupa said, which need to be fitted into a small tree bed. Parks department employees work to prepare the beds each year by removing sod and replacing it with good soil for planting.

After the trees are planted, she said a small metal disc is placed around each tree with the child’s name on it.

“We usually leave those on there for a couple of years,” she said. “As the tree grows, we cut it off so it doesn’t restrict the growth of the tree, and then we put up a sign in each bed that has the year and the names of all the kids with their trees.”

Applications to reserve a tree for the 2020 Birth Forest opened Aug. 1, Ciupa said, and the deadline to apply is Sept. 11. Application forms are available at [chestermere.ca/198/Birth-Forest](https://www.chestermere.ca/198/Birth-Forest)

The cost to take part is \$50 per tree for Chestermere residents and \$85 for non-residents. While it’s a Chestermere-centric program, Ciupa said some people do participate from Langdon, Indus and other nearby communities in Rocky View County.

She added interested residents can fill out the form on the City’s website and make their payment online through PayPal, or they can drop off their payment at Chestermere City Hall.

Source: <https://www.airdrietoday.com/rocky-view-news/chestermere-tree-planting-program-celebrates-newborns-2633220>