



By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Three fourth graders enthusiastically told the city council Monday night of their trip to Lincoln, where they represented the city of Imperial at the state's Tree City USA ceremony.

Imperial received the Tree City USA designation once again this year, by meeting a set of criteria set by the state.

The three fourth graders, Bridgette Odens, Sarah Allen and Kadyn Milner, accepted the city's newest Tree City USA flag at the April 14 ceremony, and met Gov. Dave Heineman.

Imperial is one of very few communities, if not the only one, that largely involves its young people in their Tree City USA activities.

The city's activities center on the fourth grade classes, in which the city sponsors an essay contest each year about trees. City staff select the top three essays, and those students win a trip to the Lincoln Tree City USA ceremony.

While in Lincoln the girls and their mothers also had lunch with State Sen. Mark Christensen of Imperial, toured the Capitol building and the Governor's Mansion and visited the Children's Museum.

The students read their winning essays to council members Monday night, and also shared them with classmates at last Friday's Arbor Day program at the school. Also reading her essay at the school was Shaylee Heathers, whose entry was chosen honorable mention.

Other activities at Friday's program at the school included a Charlie Brown video on Arbor Day and the signing of Imperial's Tree City USA proclamation by Imperial Mayor Annie Longan.

Each of the fourth graders was also given a gift certificate for ice cream, provided by Mandeville Construction.

City public works employee Tina Mandeville coordinated Friday's program at the school, as well as the essay contest.

Criteria the state uses in selecting its Tree City USA winners include having a city arborist or tree board, having a tree ordinance, spending \$2 per capita for tree maintenance and/or tree education and celebrating Arbor Day.

My Favorite Tree

By Bridgette Odens

Fourth grade student

My favorite tree is found in my front yard. The tree is the Gracilis European White Birch. The reason I like the tree, is because I like how it changes in the different seasons, I think it is the best climbing tree, and the different ways I use it. I don't think I would want anyone to cut down the tree or even any of the branches.

When the seasons change the tree also changes. In the fall the leaves change colors. For instance, when it is fall the leaves are green, but then they turn a yellowish golden brown. They crumple up and fall on the ground. I think the tree's leaves are the hardest leaves to rake up. The tree also changes in other ways. In the spring, it will grow leaves and it will start to give us some shade when we need it in the spring or even in the summer.

The reason I think the Gracilis European White Birch is the best climbing tree, is because I have never climbed a better tree than this one. My neighbor, Rose, my sister, Courtney, and I like to climb the tree and play house and stuff in the tree. Sometimes we have a race to see who can climb the highest. (I usually win.) Even one time I pretended that it was my house and I used the tree as a counter in my kitchen. It was fun.

We use the tree in many different ways. We use the tree roots as bases to play kick ball. We also tie a rope to the tree and make a swing. That is fun, too. We sometimes make a ride out of it. We sometimes use its shade as if we were at the ocean and its swaying branches are the palm trees. It isn't the best palm tree but it's okay, I guess. Also, we just sit under the tree for fun.

This is my favorite tree, could you tell me yours. I would love to hear what your favorite tree would be. I think it would be a pretty fun thing to do. Don't you think? Please send me your story of your favorite tree. I seriously would love to read your story so send it to: P.O. Box 721, Imperial, NE 69033. I hope you enjoyed my essay. Thank you.

My Favorite Tree

By Kaydyn Milner

Fourth grade student

My favorite tree is the cotton wood because it's cool but that's not the only reason why I like it. I like it because I have a lot of memories from it. Like when my thirteen and eleven year old brothers had a mud war with me. I always lose because I'm stuck with my four year old sister! The tree gives me protection from flying mud balls. I like it even more when I am alone because there are no flying mud balls. I like to read under it because it's nice and quiet and sometimes I play on my gaiter and I hear the bird playing a long with me. I like it so much because my family and I planted it when we moved here and each day we watch it grow little by little every day and now it's so huge. Our whole family carved their name in it but mine looks like a big blob of nothing. In the early spring I would catch the cotton that fell off but my mom would get mad because it goes everywhere. I like it when the leaves would rub together and make a cool sound. My favorite part is when I would go on walks with my mom and we would count how many cotton wood trees there was and we ended up with sixteen trees and I tried to climb one but I only got about five inches from the ground. When I was about eight I would have picnics with all my dolls. My brothers would sneak up on me and try to scare me but they are horrible at it. Trees are a good home for birds, squirrels, and a lot of animals even a good hiding spot for them too. In the winter when I was doing my chores I saw a leaf fall from a cotton wood tree and as I grabbed it one side was brown and the other side was pure white and I showed my mom and she said that she has never seen a leaf like that in her whole life. A few years ago there was a big flood. The trees are about two feet away from the water and we would climb on the tree as far as we could and then we would jump into the water. The biggest reason I picked that tree is because when I look out the window I see the tree and think about all of the fun things I will have on it tomorrow. I will remember that when another flood comes or when the birds and squirrels come back to have a home and how fun it would be to beat my brother at a mud ball

fight and how I can see another leaf with one brown side and one white side. If the world did not have cotton wood trees we could not breathe the air we breathe now. If we did not have any trees we could barely breathe!

My Favorite Tree

By Sarah Allen

Fourth grade student

My favorite tree is the Evergreen. The one in my yard is a Blue Spruce. That tree is a place where I can hang out, read, or write in my journal. It is also like a little room. There is a branch that I put my feet on. There is also a branch that I sit on. It has a lot of room so I'm not crowded. There is a branch that is like a little shelf, so if I bring more than one thing I don't have to hold them all. After I climb up in the branches of the tree no one can see me but I can see them. The tree has needles instead of leaves that stay green all year long.

Evergreen trees also help the environment by purifying the air that we breathe. They are also great wind-breakers so you just have to get between the branches and cuddle up to keep warm. They also provide shade on hot days. Dry needles burn easy so if you're camping you could start a fire to keep nice and warm or you could roast some marshmallows. And if you like to hunt, you can hide in the tree. It is also a great hiding spot for hide-and-seek. Even my cats hide in it.

People all over Nebraska have Evergreen trees in their yard. Some of the reasons they have them is that they make great wind-breakers and that they also look pretty. Some people like to hang lights on them in the winter time and that makes them Christmas trees. When my Grandpa was a little boy, his family would go down to the river where he lived and would cut down Evergreen trees to put in their house for Christmas. He said you could smell the Evergreen tree everywhere in the house.

I also like the colors of the trees. They can be light blue, dark green, and light green. I like the light green best because my favorite color is lime-green. I think the light blue trees are neat because they look green from far away. I like them best in winter because the snow covers the outside of the tree and it looks pretty. Someday I plan to write a book about Evergreen trees.

I'll write the book about my Evergreen tree in my yard. I'll write some facts about Evergreen trees. Before I write the book, I'll probably go out in an Evergreen forest to see what it is like. I'll also write about what kind of animals live there. I've seen many Evergreen trees in my life, but the one that I like best is the one in my front yard.