

Oak Harbor Garry Oak Society Essay Contest 2016

Entry #1: James Fetty, 3/8/16, planting location: my yard, 328 SW Dyer St., Oak Harbor, WA

Oak tree Oak tree standing by the sea. Oak tree Oak tree watching over me. For centuries you've been here, now you shelter me. In days of old the Men Of Oak were Druids crafty and wise. Praising under branches uplifted to the skies. In Eggerman woods I fought them, those who would cut down. Those mighty Oaken branches for whom we named our town! Eggerman woods is now a state park near Naperville Il. you're welcome.

Entry #2: Victoria Powell, 3/20/16, planting location: 2466 Cahill Place, Oak Harbor, WA

When I first arrived in Oak Harbor I was completely enamored by the sheer number of trees still remaining on the island. With as many changes that have come to the island from industry and community building, it was a surprise that so much of the fauna survived and been allowed to thrive.

However, there has recently been a growing need for awareness of Oak Harbor's arboreal history: The Garry Oak. Besides the history, which was fascinating to read, these trees helped give the very namesake from which we live are now difficult to spot.

Our favorite and accessible Garry Oak once lived and thrived next to the Post Office in the main part of town. In 2013, due to complications, it had to be cut down. It was a loss to the community, but not just for its beauty.

The Garry Oak tree is a symbol of both natural strength and patience. Anyone who has lived on Whidbey Island has experienced the seasonal wind gusts that come up and rush over the towns. There are times that a tree might collapse or branches might land in places, but for the most part both the regular and abundant pines and the now rare Garry Oaks manage to bend without breaking. These trees are resilient and hearty, a great lesson for life. It is also a symbol of patience, as a fully mature tree can take years to grow.

For generations these trees have grown on Whidbey Island and been a jungle gym for children and brave adolescents, a shady spot on summer days to sit beneath and relax, and a source of fine wood for local craftsmen. For those that have given so much, it is with a happy heart I write to earn the chance to plant another Garry Oak so that the legacy can grow and continue forward history. My Aunt Fern, no pun intended, loves growing and keeping her indoor and outdoor plants alive and thriving. This gift, this legacy would be for her and my nephew who is old enough to start learning the Island history and how to appreciate the trees for which his town was named. I want the chance to give to my family a piece of growing history.

Entry #3: Peggy Darst Townsdin, 3/28/16, planting location: Pioneer Park Cemetery, Oak Harbor

The Grand Old Oak

There stood a great Oak for a few hundred years. Native people watched her grow up from a tiny acorn. They honored all of the great Oak Trees near the bay.

Pioneers came to the bay from faraway places, such as England, Ireland, Norway, Germany, and Sweden. The great Oak stood out. They did not cut it down. Little Sibella Barrington called it "My Tree". She and the other pioneer children would rest, play and picnic under the great Oak's branches on their way walking to and from their one room school house up on Freund's Hill.

Year after year the great Oak grew. More people came to the town on the bay, Oak Harbor, named for the great Oak trees found growing there on Whidbey Island. These people wore wooden shoes. Soon more people came to the town on the bay. These people wore uniforms. They brought seaplanes, jets and nice young families with them. The little town grew. The great Oak tree stood strong and was admired by all. Season after season, year after year, she grew tall and healthy in her grassy field.

More roads were built. Pavement was poured down right up to the great Oak's trunk, and covered all of her grassy field. It surrounded her, and started to choke her. Large plastic sheets of plastic were laid down over the grass as well. It was to stop any plants from growing. It added to the choking of the great Oak's roots, preventing the rain that nourished the great Oak from reaching her roots.

Still the great Oak lived. Her roots spread out far and wide. She refused to give up, even as the pavement took a toll on her health. Every spring and summer she still spread out her beautiful green leaves and canopy.

Many people admired her.

A group of people formed in the town. They called themselves, "Harbor Pride". They were proud of the harbor and the great Oak trees. They named the great Oak, "The Grand Old Oak". One woman named Melissa took a special interest in the grand Oak tree.

Alas, the town leaders decided that the grand Oak tree was a hazard. She showed signs of becoming unhealthy. They feared she would lose a

branch or cause harm to the people of the town. They took a vote; they would chop the great Oak down. Melissa brought in Oak tree specialists. They said, “take out that pavement at her trunk, take up that plastic, so her roots can be nourished”! At Melissa’s and other’s pleading, the town leaders voted just in time to spare the ax. Pavement was taken out. New healthy soil was brought in. The grand Oak was watered. Harbor Pride members planted flowers and native plants surrounding the Grand Old Oak. She began to thrive again. She had ten more years of seasons. Melissa spent hundreds of hours tending her garden around the Grand Old Oak. Others volunteered many hours as well, weeding and watering and caring for the Grand Old Oak.

Then one Sunday morning, with no warning to the town’s people, the Grand Old Oak was attacked and killed with chainsaws that ripped through her beautiful limbs and her huge old trunk. The town leaders had decided to get rid of that old Oak tree, they feared. No effort was made to spare her.

That sunny Sunday morning Melissa gathered flowers and plants in a basket and walked down the road to tend her garden at the Grand Old Oak. A sudden sharp pain stabbed her in the chest, as if an angry hand had seized her heart, as she saw her beloved Oak Tree being razed to the ground. All that is left now of the Grand Old Oak Tree, which grew for a few hundred years, is a large round stump, a few inches high. That is all that marks the spot where a great Oak Tree grew for a few hundred years.

Entry #4: Robert Olson, 3/31/16, planting location: 1791 Polnell Rd., Oak Harbor

Living in oak harbor all my life . I always enjoyed the garryoaks every time I went to town. Driving west bound on south east 8 th there is a beautiful Garry oak to greet me in the middle of the road and when leaving it says so long until next time. I have a beautiful spot to plant a tree that will have room to grow and never be in the way of anything. And my great grandkids will say what a beautiful tree great dad planted.

Entry #5: Fairway Point Community, 4/11/16, planting location Fairway Point tree retention area, Oak Harbor

A FAIRWAY POINT GARRY OAK (Our new favorite Garry Oak)

Several of us in the Fairway Point Community have recently learned about the Oak Harbor Garry Oak Society and its mission to provide outreach, education and preservation of our city's Garry oak trees (*quercus garryana*). We have appreciated the grandness and majesty of the Garry oaks that we see throughout Oak Harbor. We shared an instinctual dismay when the Garry oak near the post office was cut down. We now share the exciting possibility of planting a Garry oak tree in our community!

In Fairway Point, we have a space designated by the city as a "Tree Retention Area." It is referred to as Phase 4 Tract E on the community plat map and is somewhat adjacent to the cul-de-sac of Downfield Way. Several of us walk each day around our community and have wanted to make this area more attractive. We believe that a Garry oak in the Tree Retention Area would be an amazing addition to our community, and would further public education about this special tree while encouraging members of our community to participate in the planting of a future giant. Upon completion of the planting, we would send an informational paper to all our homeowners telling them of the history and importance of the tree.

We are informed that the City of Oak Harbor has no objection to our Homeowners' Association desire to plant a Garry oak, where it will indeed be "retained" and cherished for future generations. (We will have to verify that no utility lines pass through the area.)

The area for the Garry oak is approximately 9,397 sq ft, receives full sun, and the soil seems suited to the quality of drought-resistance attributed to the Garry oak.

The tree, in the fullness of time, would be a living monument for, not only the Fairway Point community, but for the City and the OHGO Society and its work. We are excited about saving the Garry oak and our community is a great

place to do it!

Nina Carter

Bruce Freeman, President FPCA

Heather McConnell, Vice President FPCA

Kim Graves, Secretary, FPCA

Jan Oberholtzer, Treasurer,

FPCA Clare Christiansen, President, Oakmont Homeowner Association

Entry #6: Jessica Monaghan, 4/12/16, planting location: Windjammer Park, Oak Harbor

My favorite Garry Oak

My favorite Garry Oak... it doesn't exist. I love all of them. They have been around for so long; its like they have been watching me grow into the person I have become today. Trees stick around for quite some time, and I believe it should stay like that. Actually no, I don't think. I know they should stay like that; stay planted where they are until it dies off in its natural way. When I was younger, I loved being around nature and I still do. I've become attached to it; to the Garry Oaks and the fact that there are people who want to dispose of them; makes me furious. Some times I don't think they understand the importance of trees and how much they mean to people like me. Garry Oaks are living. they provide not only a healthy environment, but memories and happiness. I drive by Garry Oaks and sometimes walk past them and every time. I have this same thought on my mind "You should be loved and cared for just like a mother and her baby". Now the reason I would like to plant one of these trees is to represent the lives of the people who fought for its kind. I want it to become strong, healthy and remembered for its beauty. Not to mention this city is called OAK HARBOR and this tree is called a GARRY OAK. OAK, is the key word here! the Garry Oak will represent Oak Harbor. One day people will understand what these trees mean to us and I hope that day comes soon.

Entry #7: Kent Ramier, 4/13/16, planting location: 1171 Monroe Landing Rd., Oak Harbor

The Garry Oak trees of Oak Harbor define our town. My family are just now moving to beautiful Whidbey Island so we do not yet have any cherished memories of a favourite tree. While most of the available property around Oak Harbor is heavily forested, we decided to make our home on two acres with only a dozen fruit trees currently growing. One of our very first tasks in order to make our land/house into a home is to make/plant our garden and some local trees. Our family has already decided that the focal point of our property should be a well planned Garry Oak grove with this 2016 Arbor Day tree celebrating Oak Harbor's 100th as the centerpoint of our yard. Thank you for considering our entry and for holding this contest. Happy 100th - Long live the Garry Oak!

Entry #8: Debra Rusnak, 3rd grade teacher at Crescent Harbor Elementary *(Student entries #8A thru 8L to follow)*, planting location: CHE School

I was thrilled to see the opportunity to teach history of Oak Harbor and the Garry Oak trees to my 3rd grade class, who, for the majority, are Navy and stationed,

or have been stationed, all over the world. Their time at Whidbey Island Naval Air Station may be a short time, or, lucky for them, a longer stay, however, teaching history and conserving nature is a win-win for this teacher!

We have a plethora of information to pass on to our public school children today; state standards, common core, scope and sequence, the list does go on. My constant goal in planning my teaching moments is, how can I make it relevant, meaningful and a learning memory for my students. "Hey! I remember that from 3rd grade"

I grew up in Eastern Washington on a wheat farm. Not really a tree in sight, unless planted as landscape, fruit orchard, or wind break. My first visit to the Seattle area as a child, left me overwhelmed, at the sight of tree after tree after tree over Stevens Pass. Evergreen trees for sure, but trees at that time became a special memory.

My husband and I moved with our family from the North Bend area to Whidbey Island in 1999. I discovered Madrona Trees and Garry Oaks. Huge monuments that left an impression of wow - these don't grow just anywhere.

So, I chose your essay contest as a relevant, teachable moment, to share Whidbey Island history and the science of nature to my kids in regards to the local, Garry Oak Trees. They need our human intervention to continue and I hoped to instill some passion to saving our planet to 8 and 9 year olds. I believe they will remember and do something.

Thank you for giving me this educational opportunity, and wouldn't it be nice, to replace the trees that were transplanted, and ultimately died within our community of Crescent Harbor Elementary. We will plant and preserve our Garry Oaks!

Entry #8A: Ily Gilmore

Garry Oaks need to be saved by replanting for future generations of Oak Harbor. I believe we need to bring awareness by planting young trees. Native Americans planted Garry Oaks as a source of protein and camas bulbs would grow in an Oak Meadow.

Naval Air Station arrived in Oak Harbor in 1941 and development began. Oak trees were destroyed and not replanted.

Entry #8B: Carson Lang

I believe that in Oak Harbor, the Garry Oak Trees need to be saved. They also need to be taken better care of so they live longer. At our school in Crescent Harbor Elementary, we believe that the government should plant more Garry Oaks because if they don't, Garry Oaks could become extinct. That is why the Garry Oaks should be saved.

Entry #8C: Jaydin Lopez

I believe we need to bring awareness to the Garry Oaks by planting young trees. The reason why Native Americans planted Garry Oak Trees is because it is a source of protein and camas bulbs grow around the oaks. The Naval Air Station bought all the land when they were building houses, they moved the Garry Oaks to Maylors point. In all of the 54 trees that were transplanted, only 15 survived.

Our school is part of the Crescent Harbor community that decided we need to save the Garry Oaks.

Entry #8D: Julie Gonzales

I believe we need to bring awareness to the Garry Oaks by planting young trees. If we don't, they could become extinct in Oak Harbor.

The Native Americans planted Garry Oaks as a food source of protein. Also, Navy Air Station Whidbey arrived in Oak Harbor in 1942, development erased the trees on the base.

Entry #8E: Anthony Fillmore

Garry Oaks need to be saved. The purpose is Crescent Harbor needs to replace the Garry Oak trees that got cut down.

In our class, Team Rusnak works hard to be responsible. We will try our best to save the Garry Oak trees.

Our school is part of the Crescent Harbor community and we are dedicated to save the Garry Oaks.

Entry #8F: Addison Boyer

My class and I are learning about the Garry Oak Trees. Garry Oaks need to be saved and we need to plant young ones too.

When the US Navy came to Oak Harbor, they bought the land which had lots of Garry Oak trees in Crescent Harbor housing. They cut down many Garry Oak trees because they needed space.

We need to save and replant the Garry Oak Tree.

Entry #8G: Lily Isaacs

I believe the Oak Harbor Community needs to save Garry Oaks because the Navy developed on the land they grew on. In Oak Harbor, our class is dedicated to save the Garry Oaks by getting in the newspaper and winning a tree to plant! One reason to save the Garry Oaks is because they provide wind and clearly, our class needs to win for this! When the Native Americans came, they planted the Garry Oak trees to make a source of protein. If my class winds, I will be happy because it will be really cool to plant the Garry Oak trees to help our community and our nation.

Entry #8H: Leland Deutscher

I believe we need to bring awareness to the Garry Oaks by planting young trees.

Also, Native Americans planted Garry Oaks as a source of protein and camas bulbs grown in Oak Harbor meadows.

But, the Naval Air Station arrived in Oak Harbor. they cleared them all out! That is why we need to save the Garry Oak from extinction. Today, we are saving the Garry Oak from disappearing.

Entry #8I: Jeremiah Linabury

Our school needs to save Garry Oak trees because the Native Americans planted them as a source of protein.

Another reason why we need to save Garry Oaks is because the NAS arrived in 1941. Development began and Oak Trees were destroyed.

Another reason we need to save the Garry Oaks is because our school is part of the Crescent Harbor community and we need to show responsibility to future generations.

Entry #8J: Miley Dumbleton

I believe that we should plant more Garry Oak trees to cherish later on. That is why I think we should plant Garry Oak Trees.

My first reason is because Native Americans decided to plant Garry Oaks as a source of protein for food.

My second reason is the Naval Air Station arrived in 1941 and the Garry Oak trees were destroyed for development.

My third reason is my school is part of the Crescent Harbor community. I want to see a Garry Oak!

Entry #8K: Tessa Timm-Veeser

I believe that people should stop cutting down the Garry Oaks. We need to tell the Navy to stop cutting down the Garry oaks to make room for more people. My class is thinking about growing new ones. Garry Oaks could become extinct.

Entry #8L: Emma Campbell

The Garry Oak Trees need to be saved because we need to keep planting Garry Oak trees because it is part of our generations to come in the Oak Harbor community.

I believe that we still need to bring more Garry Oaks trees, because I do not know what I will do without Garry Oak trees in Oak Harbor.

Native Americans need to keep planting Garry Oak trees in Oak Harbor to save them from disappearing completely.

Naval air station arrived in Oak Harbor in 1941, and development began which destroyed many of our Oak Trees.

Entry #9: Sandey Brandon, 4/14/16, planting location: 2282 Cricket Ln., Freeland, WA

A Legacy for Posterity

Magical trees. That's what I think whenever I see their towering silhouettes against the Oak Harbor skyline. Interestingly enough, Walt Disney had a similar vision because he used the *Quercus garryana* - Garry oak - as inspiration for the enchanted forest in his animated classic "Snow White."

These majestic trees stand sentinel all along the Pacific coastline from southern British Columbia to Los Angeles. Unlike their redwood and sequoia brethren, which radiate a timeless tranquility and upright majesty, Garry oaks are a delight of knarly, twisting formations that mimic bonsai gone berserk.

Before there were roads and habitations, before a concerted effort to plant the trees was adopted by settlers to the island, acorns were a food staple of the indigenous population. History indicates that the trees found along our coastline may have gotten a foothold on the land as a result of the trading practices among the various tribes in the region.

However, the hold the trees have on our hearts is etched in Oak Harbor's tree-lined streets and parks, the name of the city itself and many other commercial starts rooted in the words "oak" and "acorn."

It is clear that the march of progress threatens all of the flora and fauna of our island, with the massive Garry oaks both targets and icons. These oaks have character. Chop them off for power line access or remove broken boughs and the trees simply reshape themselves into semaphores of beauty and endurance.

Pick a favorite Garry oak in the Oak Harbor habitat? What a difficult choice, when all the trees have individual grace notes. Now that the Keister post office behemoth has been cut down, the one standing in the middle of the road on SE 8th near Pasek gets my vote. There is something utterly charming about routing a street around a tree as a means of preservation instead of simply chopping it down. Every time I drive through Oak Harbor, I detour through that neighborhood to salute that particular tree and wish it a long life free from disease or man's disposition. But there is no immunity from development and the Garry oaks in captivity, while protected, are yet subject to clearance. Twenty-five years ago, we got 350 seedlings from the Department of Natural Resources for \$70, which we split with friends. My husband and I planted 180 on our 20 acres, the majority of which grew without any pampering whatsoever. My husband has been gone for more than a decade, but the trees are flourishing.

A Chinese proverb says that the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second best time is today. I would like to plant a Garry oak tree on the acreage in Freeland on which I am building my last homestead, where I can watch it grow and imagine its splendid silhouette backlit by sunset when I am gone.

Entry #10: Katherine Lof, 4/15/16, OHHS student, planting location: 675 SW Franklin Ct., Oak Harbor

I have not lived in Oak Harbor very long, but one of my favorite things about it is the landscape, especially the trees. Yes, the water and the sky and everything else about Whidbey Island is breath taking, but the trees take the cake. There is something special about looking up at a giant tree and knowing it has seen everything. Some of them may have even seen the discovery of Whidbey Island, and that is incredible.

As a senior about to move away for college, I want so very badly to leave a legacy behind, and what better way than to plant a tree? A tree just keeps growing and growing, becoming something beautiful that people appreciate. The idea of coming back from college for breaks, or maybe even to live my life here, and seeing the tree that I planted sounds amazing. It is, quite literally, planting my roots firmly in my home.

I know that no matter where I go, I will always be able to have a piece of me in Oak Harbor. When I am in Colorado for school, I'll know I have a piece of me growing back home, reminding people of me and helping make Oak Harbor even more beautiful.

Trees symbolize family, and I feel as if Oak Harbor is a family, connecting their roots in a way that not everyone can see. They help bring people together, and it is comforting to know that when I leave, a piece of me will always be here. It will preserve my legacy and keep me firmly rooted here even when I have gone far away.

Entry #10A: Carolyn Michaelis, 4/15/16, OHHS student, planting location: 1853 Wellington Dr., Oak Harbor

Being the daughter of a military family, and thus having moved fourteen times in my eighteen years of life has caused me to strive for adventure while simultaneously craving stability. After long days of photography and hiking I appreciate coming home to a few consistent things.

I spent quite a bit of my childhood climbing to the tops of cherry blossom trees so that I could watch the doves clean each others feathers. It was often my favorite place to sit with my camera and snap moments frozen in time while my legs fell asleep in the crooks of the branches. The overly large blossoming tree had both the adventure I enjoyed, and the stability I needed. Since these times I have always viewed trees in a kind of loving way. Not only for what they do for the earth, but for what they have done for me. Since the day my family moved to Oak Harbor, we have been hiking new trails and exploring new forests, never disappointed by the sheer amount of oak trees there are and how many animals they provide homes to. Some of these animals have given me more reason to love the trees.

I hiked behind Fort Nugent Park one time, really quite late at night. It was an easy hike, barely any hills, and not too many spiny plants blocking my path. Owls cried out in the tree tops and every once in a while you could hear a hissing noise that drowned out the beautiful song of the frog choir which sang in the leaves. It was on this trail that I passed a short middle-aged Garry Oak Tree that I have passed many times before: Although this time, one of its branches was snapped at the base, and was leaning into my path. I stopped walking so that I could step over the broken branch as carefully as possible when I realized what was sitting on top of it. A saw-whet owl, the size of my hand, balanced atop the broken branch close to the base, inspecting the damage to his home, only two feet away from my face. I didn't move. Neither did he. We looked at each other for quite sometime before I realized I should take a picture of him before it was too late. After my camera caught the shot, he left, and so did I. I began thinking about everything that night. I thought about how this was his home. A home where dogs tear through the trails in the morning and Frisbees fly towards the trunks in the evening. I thought about all of the other little owls that may not get to go home because their tree was cut down for houses. I think of all of the times I have moved and wonder if he's done the same. And I wonder if the owl craves stability.

From this experience I realize that I only want more homes for the animals in our world. I want to plant this tree so that I may give a home to an owl that may live peacefully, to give stability to the next family in my home, and so their children may experience what I have; that the world is full of curious things, and when we preserve them we are leaving behind experiences for many generations to

come. I would love to go to college knowing that I am not only leaving behind a tree, I am leaving behind a teacher, a legacy, a home.

Entry #10B, Sophie Dickinson, 4/15/16, OHHS student, planting location:
Lanyard Loop, Oak Harbor

Being the daughter of two Oak Harbor High School graduates and long time residents, I've never known anything different than this quaint city. I grew up using the tall oak trees as shade for the few sunny days we have here. I grew up worrying about them falling when we get those infamous Whidbey windstorms. Despite all the windstorms, power outages and construction, there are certain oak trees have grown up alongside me these past eighteen years and serve as landmarks for most of my most treasured childhood memories.

Growing up we lived in a charming house surrounded trees by on a two acre property located on the outskirts of town. Of all the types of trees and shrubbery around, my sister and I always gravitated towards a specific oak tree which stood about 100 feet away from my bedroom window. After months of playing in the woods and making make shift forts that would always be blown over by the next morning, we decided to take matters into our own hands. We searched the property for scraps of wood, nails and rope. That afternoon, we spent the whole day up in the tree building a more permanent solution to our little fort debacle. We used rocks to hammer in our nails and a homemade rope pulling system to raise and lower building materials to each other. The next day, we raided our arts and crafts supply shelf and painted flowers and our names on the fort to mark our territory. My sister and I would spend hours playing house or reading. Despite us using scraps o plywood and rocks as hammers, our fort has remained sturdy for ten years. The tree in our yard has provided a sense of ownership and also gave us place to go when we didn't want to come home for dinner.

Another one of my favorite oaks is the one that towers over the lawn of the big, white Presbyterian Church at the corner of Eighth Avenue and Midway. A good amount of my childhood was spent at that church, between Sunday Services and Fellowship Hall afterwords to Vacation Bible School and Easter egg hunts under that tree. Even my parents wedding was held there and I remember being in my flower girl dress with my sister after the wedding and being so excited to go play in the lawn by the tree because I had been sitting on a pew for hours. I remember using the tree as base in tag and yelling at my sister, "No Puppy Guarding!" The tree acts as a background in many pictures from my most special memories through out my life including my baptism as a baby, my parents wedding and many Easters.

The oak tree right next to the back door of the pool also comes to mind when asked to pick some of my favorite ones. I've been a competitive swimmer for the past eight years and the pool has been like a second home. In the summer,

we'd practice for hours and then go outside and run laps. That specific tree marked the finish line. I was always so motivated by the sight of that tree on the horizon. For me that tree grows tall and strong, just as I have during my time swimming. The tree is also a symbol of unity for me. When I'd finish running, I would stand there and cheer for my teammates as they finish and vice versa. We had many team meetings, ab workouts and team cheers under the branches of that tree.

Growing up under the shade of all these oaks has been such a blessing. I love each and every one. I love all the one's I've mentioned as well as many others. I love the oak that is just down the road from the church, that splits the road into two. I love the oak that grows outside of the Police Department and has a hole in it's trunk that I've always suspected a squirrel lives in. As I leave this town, I'll always cherish the memories I've made in this town and I'll miss the sight of each oak.

Entry #10C: Lessa Chiaraluce, 4/15/16, OHHS student, planting location: Windjammer Park or Oak Harbor High School campus

It's quite fascinating how a simple tree- in this case a Garry Oak tree- can symbolize so much just by its presence. For the better of history, Garry Oak trees have inhabited the lovely Whidbey Island, sharing their home with the rest of our small community. Treasured by man but under appreciated just as much, these trees live gracefully and beautifully in our small town of Oak Harbor. These trees not only serve as the namesake of Oak Harbor, but also symbolize a common origin, a common threshold, and most importantly- a common home. Upon hearing of Oak Harbor before moving up here, the first thing that came to mind were trees. Not only because the name of our town includes the name of such, but also because Washington state is known as the Evergreen state (Which was unheard of since I came from the terribly brown Southern California). However, it wasn't until I took residency here that I realized what majesty and beauty a tree can hold and the symbol it can be recognized as. Moving here has made me grateful for the environment around us that we live in.

While exploring my new home, I found myself at Windjammer Park, where the ocean meets the Oaks in one of the most wonderful of places. Following the pathway, I looked out and saw the playground where children were playing without a care in the world. Nearby stood an oak tree in which in which several others were taking shade under after an energized day in the sun. It then hit me that these Garry Oak trees were embedded in the smallest aspects of our lives. These children perhaps their parents- and their parents parents- all share one thing in common; They took shade under that same tree over the years, connecting them to one common ground.

The beautiful thing about trees is that they are immovable. They're able to see the change and growth that we ourselves are too busy to take notice of I'd like to plant one of these trees to repeat history in the best possible way So that, just

like that day in the park, children and parents and grandparents will all be able to bathe in everything that that one tree has to offer. To bring a family together. Most importantly, to bring a community together. Because just like a Garry Oak tree, the community of Oak Harbor will always be able to trace their roots back to the small city where the beach meets the trees.

Entry #10D: Kaytie DeMaio, 4/15/16, OHHS student, planting location: 1605 SW 16th Ave., Oak Harbor

Trees have always inspired an immense happiness in me that takes the form of a warm fuzzy feeling originating from within my core. It is quite similar to the feeling I experience playing with my lovable little nieces. Washington is their birthplace. My sister chose to start her family in this enchanting town and Oak Harbor will always feel like home whether or not they are forced to part from it one day due to her military career. The main reason I want a tree is so that I can give it to my sister and her children to symbolize the blessing of new life that her house has experienced, multiple times!

My sister is in the Navy so it is extremely possible that they may be relocated at some point in the future. This increases my desire to give them a tree because it would be an imprint on the Earth that her and her daughters could always remember fondly. The girls would be so ecstatic over the addition to the yard. They are young, merely one and three years of age but they have a great appreciation for nature. Even if they cannot recall the event of its appearance when they are old enough to comprehend its significance in their life, I am positive that they would still be flattered when they hear the explanation of what this gift represents.

I love trees; so I obviously would benefit from the visual pleasure that its presence would undoubtedly provide. However, I do not want this tree for myself. I am much more excited about the prospect of being able to transfer this beautiful, meaningful present to my amazing family. We would all feel so honored and grateful to be granted the opportunity of nourishing and caring for one of your Garry Oak trees.

Entry#10E: Cristina Ramirez, 4/15/16, OHHS student, planting location: OHHS, 1 Wildcat Way, Oak Harbor

When I was younger, a mere age of six, there was an oak tree. The tree stood in the courtyard of my elementary school, a gorgeous, proud tree at least two times the height of me. At the bottom there was a plaque I couldn't read. My teacher said it was in honor of a student who had died, planted by her family so she would always be remembered and loved in a place she called home. Now I am seventeen, and there is no tree at my high school. Throughout my four years, students, some of them close to me, have died tragically, their memory forgotten with every graduating class.

I look back on the oak tree I played beside, how often I thought about the little girl it represented, and I would love for the students who lived their final days at the school to have such a tree.

For it would not just be a tree, something green and brown that creatures occasionally call their home. It would be a symbol that time continues on, life forever grows into a strong tree that seemed so weak a sapling before. In its resolute stance there would be a sense of strength. Strength in the memory of those we have lost, and strength in our school's family to survive any tragedy we have endured, or may face in the future.

I would like to plant a tree, but it would not be for me. It would be for everyone in the high school to remember our past, for for those who made it.

To be never forgotten, and always loved.

Entry #10F: Daniel Richard, 4/15/16, OHHS student, planting location: OHHS, 1 Wildcat Way, Oak Harbor

I never gave much thought about trees when I was growing up. I never reflected on their existence and how much a single tree could provide for others. And how much they sacrifice. I'm kind of glad I didn't. Thinking about things isn't bad or anything like that, but I'm glad I didn't trouble myself thinking about THOSE things in the past.

A few years ago my mother asked my dad to remove a tree stump in our backyard. I imagined it was a large tree because the stump was about as wide as a tire for out Ford Expedition. I remember that the tree was removed by the previous owners of our house so they could have a better view of the water. At the time I just appreciated the circumstances that gave me a great view. I didn't think about the birds that could've enjoyed the view, just what I had as a result. Anyway, the stump remained and it was a hazard for people and pets, and it had to be removed. I decided to join my dad, because the day was hot and my brother was away, so I grabbed a shovel and got to work. Hour later, after digging and cutting and pushing and pulling, the stump remained. I remember looking at our victim and noticing the thousands of skittering ants (not termites but ants, I can remember how harmful they looked) that were spilling out of the crevasses that we created. I didn't think much of it then, but now I understand how the tree must have been harboring the insects for much of its life. Even in death the tree was providing for others. And yet we tried to take that away too. We had another trick up our sleeves. My dad had doused the tree stump in a smelly green liquid that would accelerate the rotting process. After possibly a century of growing tall and providing shelter and food to so many organisms, seemingly over night, the tree was already shedding its bark, exposing its red and unscathed skin that was softer and easier to destroy. The roots themselves seemed to pop up, and all we had left to do was pull.

All around the world, trees are a critical part of ecosystems and are used for countless reasons. From the time they are a sapling to even a few years after their deaths, trees are sacrificed for the benefit of others. Unfortunately,

humans, despite all their innovations, have taken advantage of trees the most out of anything else in the world. Therefore, it would be an awful time the moment trees are gone and forgotten, for the trees themselves and for their dependents. Their presence on Earth is on the wane, and even though they are still numerous, I would personally not like to take part in that process. I would rather plant a tree instead.

Entry #10G: Zylveranne Laborce, 4/15/16, OHHS student, planting location: 801 N. Oak Harbor St., #1

Trees are timeless. When you think about it, all throughout history many things and people and places and cultures all change in the landscape of life, but the trees, just like oxygen and everything else in nature that never change; are there through it all. If I were to plant a tree it would be for many reasons all of which are mainly symbolic of the personal experiences I have in life. A tree for me would represent the stability, the home, and the enduring tower of strength for when the storms of life hit me. Another really good reason that I hold near and dear to my heart would be for this tree to be planted as a tangible legacy for my future children and grandchildren to admire and enjoy and run to when they need a secret place to hide away and rest from all the noise in their lives or just to be alone from society. On a different note I understand how cliché it sounds when I say that I would want to leave it as a legacy but I really don't care what other people think. It's very meaningful for me and that's all the validation I need. Trees not only give life because literally we were to eliminate every single tree from the face of this planet, we would not have anymore oxygen to sustain not just our own life but as well as many other creatures who have to survive on this planet too. Trees can be great reminders of why we humans live, the individual spectrum of every human being's reason to live is so beautiful. I personally live to seek meaning and find beauty in the everyday routine of my life. When I was younger I remember when I used to sneak out into the backyard at midnight on a cool summer day and just lean against the base of the tree trunk of the tree we had. I had felt a sense of peace and solitude wash over me. Trees can be a source of comfort and reminds me of the many films I used to watch that depicted scenes of the heroine running to their secret place of solitude, hiding, and refuge; and other various life experiences I've collected over the years. These scenes also always included a beautiful tree as the centerpiece or shall I say the very place that these people would run away to and rest with. There is just something symbolically beautiful about trees and in a way they represent us humans and the unique life experiences we all share as a collective whole in the grand scheme of life. I see trees and am reminded of God and his workmanship, I am humbled and reminded at the end of the day I am not at the center of the universe and that I play a very small but beautiful part in this great tapestry of life that he is continuously weaving every single day although I know my little world is every bit as important and vital to the big picture. So this legacy that I would want to build and cultivate before I die and

for my family to enjoy after I die is a legacy of hope, humility, beauty, worship, and refuge. Poems, stories, and many other forms of literature have paid and will continue to pay homage to the mystifying and timeless beauty of the trees. The tree of life is a fine example of a symbolic reminder and relationship for all humans that there is a creator. There is hope. There is healing. Despite the ugly harsh reality of this world. I remember napping beneath the protective and comforting shades of the beautiful cherry blossom trees from the sun's harsh rays one sunny afternoon in the summer when I was out on an invigorating jog. It is one of my greatest treasured memories. I felt so at peace and incredibly comfortable and protected by these beautiful trees and it was all offered to me for nothing, I didn't have to pay anything for it. It was free. I am one of those individuals who seek refuge and comfort in the solid stability of trees when I just need to be alone with my thoughts. It is for self preservation and tranquility. So I would choose to plant trees simply for their magnificence in their beauty, protection, healing, shelter, and enduring stability that is symbolic to attacking and eradicating all human worries, anxieties, and stress as well as internal strife. To me trees are just so beautiful.

Entry#10H: Yuki Betcher, 4/15/16, OHHS student, planting location: OHHS, 1 Wildcat Way, Oak Harbor

Garry Oak Essay

Too many a scientist a tree is a living organism, one that uses sunlight for energy and produces the air we breath. To some Native Peoples, a belief is upheld that trees contain spiritual energy, just like all other things on this earth. To many animals, trees mean a way of survival by shelter and food. But there is one thing we can all agree on: trees represent life. Trees are the life from the past, the life that sustains the present, and the life that will survive to see the future.

The past is the entire history of life so far. Trees, just like our own Garry oaks, have seen events in the past that some of us may only read about. Trees have given life to past generations, they have lived through past seasons and past disasters that they sometimes leave hints of. These hints can be as noticeable and shocking as bark charred black by wildfire, or something more subtle and reminiscent as a small carving of letters made by two lovers from along ago. Trees have seen settlements turn to towns and cities, and lakes dry to ponds and puddles. They have seen life being gifted and life being taken away. Trees are also very much relevant to the present. Like us, they observe the changes and happenings of each passing day. Perhaps we can't see them in the same light as us, because they aren't going to school or work, they aren't using smartphones, they don't have to pay bills or taxes. So are they truly living? The answer of course, is yes. If anything, they are living so much more than we are, in every way imaginable. For them, this year has brought a new family of

squirrels to harbor. It has brought a new coat of bark, a new branch or two, and maybe even offspring. They are, at least this very moment, giving us life as well. Lastly, trees are the life of the future. This is the most important thing. We cannot change the past, nor can the present truly be altered. But we can always change the future, and trees are a key. By all the technology advancements we have achieved-which are still great- we have somehow lost some sight about the importance of our tall wooden friends. Trees will continue to deliver us life in the future. This is why I would like to plant a tree. The best mark anyone can leave on this earth is to know that they have given life to it. Not a child, but a life that can continue to give long after they have passed, and a life that will nurture this planet that we need so desperately to take care of. Planting a tree helps us to preserve the past, enjoy the present, and look forward to the future.

Entry#11: Kent Sherrer, 4/15/16, planting location 1791 Polnell Rd., Oak Harbor

I've admired the Garry Oaks of downtown Oak Harbor for over 30 years without understanding their historical significance! Now, thanks to your efforts and this contest, I have a new admiration for their contribution to our community and the struggles they face surviving into the future.

After all, what would Oak Harbor be without Garry Oaks? Just another harbor! And an Oak tree is such a perfect metaphor for our community. Strong, dignified, resilient, and welcoming to all who gather. Its survival allows us to connect with our past, and gives us a sense of belonging.

I have fond memories growing up in the farm country of Maryland where oak trees were likewise valued and respected. I spent many weekends hiking the rolling hills of the Appalachian Mountains with an oak canopy overhead and the crunching of leaves underfoot. And while I love the great Northwest with all its grand conifers and pines, I miss the ever-changing form of the oak tree. The barren branches of winter, the green buds of spring, the cool shade of summer, and the golden colors of fall.

Now as I get older, I start thinking of retirement, and the world our children will inherit. For the last several years I've been restoring several acres near Mariners Cove and the surrounding woods. I've enjoyed endless weekends planting trees and shrubs including Western cedar, Douglas fir, Paper birch, Bitter cherry, and Pacific madrone. I hope to preserve the natural beauty of this area along with its wide variety of habitat and wildlife. Deer, coyotes, eagles, and ducks are regular visitors. Even an occasional elk!

But thanks to your campaign, I realize I am missing a star – the Garry Oak! I found a special spot for this star at the edge of a field with lots of sunshine and a view of the Puget Sound. And while it will start small, it is an investment in the future that will grow and multiply to form an Oak Grove! I dream of friends and family gathering for generations to come, just as Natives and Settlers have gathered for generations past.