

UU FALMOUTH RELEASE

“30 Organizations from All Cape Towns Join “Be the Hope” Effort to Plant 1,500 Native White Oak Seedlings”

More than thirty Cape Cod organizations, as well as hundreds of groups and individuals across the Cape, have collaborated to acquire and plant 1,500 White Oak seedlings via the “Be the Hope” project.

At first, Dr. Lew Stern and others in the UU Falmouth’s Social and Environmental Action Committee thought 1,000 seedlings was ambitious enough. They wanted to help people throughout the Cape do something meaningful countering climate change. But the enthusiasm they encountered led Dr. Stern to add 500 seedlings to their original order, ultimately purchasing 1,500 seedlings from the Massachusetts Tree Wardens and Foresters Association (MTWFA). They are one and one half to two years old, and are 8 to 24 inches tall. Seedlings will be distributed at the end of the month to individuals, families, non-profit organizations and towns who will plant and water them. At maturity, a White Oak absorbs about 48 pounds of carbon dioxide per year, provides enough oxygen for two people, and provides many other benefits.

“I am astounded at how much people have been responding,” Stern said. “Everyone wants to be part of helping each other improve our surroundings and our grandchildren’s future. The best part is, this shows how anyone can do this kind of organizing. People respond to hope by building more hope. It’s very encouraging!” Stern leads green efforts within the UU congregation’s Social and Environmental Action Committee.

The organizations involved in the “Be the Hope” effort include the Association to Preserve Cape Cod, Cape Cod Climate Change Collaborative, Sierra Club, the Native Land Conservancy in Mashpee, The town of Sandwich, Mass Audubon of Cape Cod Youth Climate Leadership Program, North Falmouth Boy Scout Troop 38, many town conservation departments, Falmouth, Bourne, and Mashpee public schools, Falmouth Academy, St. Mary’s School of Osterville, Habitat for Humanity homeowners, many faith communities, and the Faith Communities Environmental Network.

“I have to say, I’m very, very inspired by Lew and their group who are planting oaks,” said Oak Expert and Arboretum Director Tim Boland, at a Zoomed webinar hosted by Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod (APCC) associate director Kristin Andres April 7. Boland, the executive director of the Polly Hill Arboretum, explained that White Oaks “seem to be more tolerant of many things that are attacking oaks more recently, and climate change is part of my story, climate change and oaks.” He pointed out that White Oaks one can find in our region have a range from Quebec and Ontario down to Florida and Texas. He also included the encouraging news that some white oaks in North America are “500 years old and still persisting.” Boland’s presentation, “For the Love of Oaks,” is available to see online at APCC.org. His comments about the white oak tree-planting initiative are 28 minutes into the program, and planting discussion is at 1 hour, 30 minutes.

People participated in “Be the Hope” in four ways: by both donating to get seedlings and planting them themselves; by making a financial gift to the effort, enabling others

to participate; by helping to plant and water seedlings; or by offering spots where trees may be planted.

Over \$3400 have been donated by 48 individuals and organizations. Hundreds of people, including families, public and private school students, youth groups, and North Falmouth Boy Scout Troup 38 have volunteered to plant seedlings.

Some people have used the opportunity to donate and request that a tree be planted in someone's honor or memory. Thirty-seven people will be honored or memorialized in this way, including children, grandchildren, other family members and friends, youth climate leaders, and other revered community members and leaders. Many others have been honored directly by individuals planting their own seedlings.

Thanks to donations allowing UU Falmouth to purchase additional seedlings, people were able to pick up a free white oak seedling at UU Falmouth Meeting House, 840 Sandwich Rd., Falmouth, between 10 AM and 2 PM on Saturday, April 30, first-come-first-serve, with voluntary donations accepted but not required.

UU Falmouth's Social and Environmental Action Committee will use any funds donated beyond the cost of the seedlings to give to environmental and eco-justice non-profit organizations on Cape Cod. The MTWFA uses funds it makes by selling the seedlings to provide college scholarships to future arborists and forest managers in Massachusetts.

Stern, head of the Green Sanctuary and Climate Change efforts within the Social and Environmental Action Committee at UU Falmouth, serves on the Leadership Council of the Faith Communities Environmental Network, an affiliate of the Cape Cod Climate Change Collaborative.

This year's tree-planting effort builds on other projects. Dr. Stern explained, "UU Falmouth is part of a growing collaborative effort by local faith communities to protect the Cape and eco-justice through education, sharing best practices, and advocacy. Everyone can make a big difference by making changes individually, as part of their community, and by supporting national and global efforts." More information is available at UU Falmouth's website at <https://uuffm.org/justice-environmental-justice-climate-justice-food-security/economic-environmental-justice/take-action/>

Last year, Dr. Stern and Dr. Bette Hecox-Lea presented an eight-part seminar series on the Cape Cod Climate Emergency and Eco-Justice co-sponsored by UU Falmouth, Faith Communities Environmental Network, and St. Barnabas Church in Falmouth, which can be seen at <https://capecodclimate.org/the-cape-cod-climate-emergency-eco-justice-seminar-series/>

UU Falmouth's other social action priorities are helping end food insecurity in this area, through the efforts of local food pantries, and supporting the efforts of the Wampanoag Tribe and community, in particular their native language reclamation project.

The UU Falmouth Unitarian Universalist congregation, officially named the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Falmouth, began as a lay-led fellowship group in the late 1950s, purchased its land from the Jewish Congregation of Falmouth and built and moved into its Meeting House at 840 Sandwich Road in Falmouth in 1995. More about

UU Falmouth can be found at UUFalmouth.org More about the Unitarian Universalist faith can be found at the Unitarian Universalist Association web site: UUA.org.

UU Falmouth's members, visitors and friends come from throughout the Upper Cape: Falmouth, Mashpee, Bourne, Sandwich, and beyond. Its online services make it possible for people to participate from any distance. UU Falmouth is a community of people, diverse in faith and background, joined together through shared values.

In Falmouth:

Falmouth Elementary Schools:

East Falmouth, North Falmouth, Teaticket, Mullen-Hall, Morse Pond, Lawrence, North Falmouth

Falmouth Academy

North Falmouth Boy Scouts Troop 38

Falmouth Town Forest

Salt Pond Areas Bird Sanctuaries: Bourne Farm and the Knob

Falmouth Town Forest at Long Pond

The Falmouth ROMEO group (Retired Old Men Eating Out) of scientists.

UU Falmouth: The Unitarian Universalist Congregation serving the Upper Cape: Youth Group, Choir & the following Committees: Social and Environmental Action; Welcoming Congregation; and Whole Life Learning.

Sandwich:

Sandwich Conservation Trust

Bourne:

Bourne Elementary Schools

Bourne Conservation Department

Mashpee:

Mashpee Middle High School

Native Land Conservancy

Middle and Lower Cape in Alpha Order:

Barnstable:

St. Mary's School, Osterville

Barnstable Unitarian Universalist Church

Brewster: Conservation Trust

Chatham: Town Conservation Commission

Dennis: Conservation Land Trust

Harwich: Conservation Trust

Orleans: Conservation Trust

Provincetown: Unitarian Universalist Meeting House of Provincetown

The Town of **Truro**

Wellfleet Bay Mass Audubon Society Youth Climate Leaders

Yarmouth Quaker Meeting

Habitat for Humanity of Cape Cod

Cape Abilities