

Rogers Center Dedicates Hall of Trees at Fall Festival

On Saturday, September 27th, the Friends of Rogers hosted their annual Fall Festival at Rogers Environmental Education Center. The event centered around care, community building, and the dedication of the Hall of Trees to Fred von Mechow. Fred served Rogers Center as an environmental educator for twenty-three years, and planted the trees that now stand tall along the stately walkway that leads visitors from the parking lot to the Visitor Center.

This year's Fall Festival coincided with National Public Lands Day, the nation's largest single-day volunteer event for public lands. Over 30 volunteers from the community contributed to pollinator habitat creation at Rogers Center. Participants planted wildflower seeds, and made corn husk dolls with Doris Wilkins-Wilt of the Oneida Indian Nation's Shako:wi Cultural Center. Information on forest and land stewardship was made available thanks to Paul Romanenko and the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Division of Lands and Forests.

After a delicious grilled meal, the festivities shifted from land stewardship to ceremony. All shared in the blessing of words and wisdom from Ron Patterson of the Oneida Indian Nation as he opened the dedication with a moving land acknowledgement. Current and former Rogers staff then shared memories of Fred from his decades of cherished connection with Rogers Environmental Education Center.

Finally, Ron Patterson and Fred von Mechow dug into the earth together, and led the planting of a White Pine sapling in the Hall of Trees. The new addition is known as the Tree of Peace, a symbol of unity for the nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The White Pine's presence in the Hall of Trees acknowledges the vital and continuing role of the Oneida Indian Nation at Rogers Center.

"We honor Fred's legacy through both our words and our actions. It was a pleasure to host him once again in the place where his life and work continue to inspire future generations," said David Carson, Executive Director for the Friends of Rogers.

Rogers Environmental Education Center is one of four New York State DEC environmental education centers.

The mission of the Friends of Rogers is to provide outstanding educational opportunities that excite, inspire, and motivate people of all ages to enjoy, understand, appreciate, and protect our natural environment. ➡