

Media Release

October 19, 2021

TOWN OF SHEBOYGAN – ROTARY ROOTS – LIONS -KICKOFF
EMERALD ASH BORER MITIGATION PROJECT

The Sheboygan Rotary Club through its Restoration Of Our Trees Sheboygan (ROOTS) initiative in cooperation with the Town of Sheboygan Lions Club kicked off a collaborative project with the Town of Sheboygan to provide extensive urban forest restoration in two of the town's most widely used recreational parks. The cooperative project is part of the Sheboygan Rotary Club ROOTS initiative started in 2018 to combat the devastation of public forests throughout the County caused by Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). ROOTS and the Town of Sheboygan along with the Town of Sheboygan Lion's Club, have initiated Phase I of two phase project through the planting of over 50 trees in the township's Firehouse Park off County Highway Y conducted Saturday, October 30th.

Phase I of the collaborative project involves both municipal and matching private sector funding support driven by the Sheboygan Rotary/ROOTS and the Town's Lion's Club. The venture was officially announced at a tree planting kickoff event in the Firehouse Park, Saturday morning, October 30nd. The Township EAB mitigation effort is the first of a series of ROOTS collaborative township – private sector cooperative projects to follow in 2022 and 2023 involving township lands throughout Sheboygan County. Six other Sheboygan Rotary Club ROOTS projects in the past two years, like the Town of Sheboygan initiative, are unique community-based public-private sector responses to the EAB infestation devastating eastern Wisconsin.

In jointly announcing the project with Town of Sheboygan Board Chair Daniel Hein and Town Supervisor and Park Committee Chair Char Gumm, as well as Sheboygan Rotary Club ROOTS Coordinator Tony Fessler, noted that the ROOTS Community Investment Fund (CIF) is making a cash grant of \$8,000 in addition to a grant of \$5,000 from the Town of Sheboygan Lion's Club, in support of the reforestation of both Firehouse and the Rudy Mahler Parks. The Town Chairman along with the Lions Club and the Sheboygan Rotary Club/ROOTS have jointly developed collaborative contributions of labor, equipment, material, and cash for a total accelerated replanting project valued at over \$30,000. Additional technical planning and assessment support has been provided through an urban forestry grant from the Wisconsin DNR administered by ROOTS partner, the Lakeshore Natural Resource Partnership (LNRP).

Town Chair Daniel Hein, Supervisor and Parks Chair Char Gumm, Lion's Club representative Sue Garski and Sheboygan Rotary Club President Mike Roth, announced that a total of fifty sizable non-ash trees are being planted in Firehouse Park in Phase I of the project. Phase II of the project scheduled for 2022, will see an additional planting of from 50 to 60 trees in the Rudy Mahler Park north of Eisner Avenue northeast of the City of Sheboygan. Mahler Park recreational facilities serves both Town and City residents.

In rolling out the project during a replanting event at Firehouse on the morning of October 30th; Rotary, ROOTS, Lions and Township leadership praised the close collaboration between both the public and private, including the non-profit, sectors to raise greatly needed additional resources to restore urban forestry canopies devastated by EAB. Recent tree inventories indicate that the at-risk ash canopy in Sheboygan County exceeds 17 million trees. An estimated 70% of the public tree canopy in the Town of Sheboygan is composed of ash trees most of which are now infected with the deadly EAB. I

In just three years since the ROOTS inception, the Sheboygan Rotary Club/ROOTS and its partner the Lakeshore Natural Resource Partnership (LNRP), have marshaled over \$1,500,000 and Federal and State resources in efforts to respond to EAB in Sheboygan County and eastern Wisconsin. Sheboygan Rotary Club/ROOTS partner LNRP has secured urban reforestation grants benefiting Sheboygan County from the U.S. Forest Service and Environmental Protection Agency valued at over a million dollars to replant much of the Sheboygan Marsh, Esslingen Park, Gerber Lake, and a range of other public land holdings throughout Sheboygan County. The Sheboygan Rotary Club/ROOTS and LNRP EAB collaboration is unique to Sheboygan County and surrounding eastern Wisconsin. The Rotary/ROOTS-LNRP partnership was recognized by the Wisconsin DNR's Urban Forestry Council to receive its 2021 Project Partnership Award for the State of Wisconsin earlier this year.

During the October 30th project rollout, ROOTS Coordinator Tony Fessler was supported by Township leadership and Rotary representatives in encouraging maximum support for this ongoing effort by area corporations, businesses, service clubs, and foundations with an interest of preserving our endangered forest canopy for future generations. Fessler noted that robust urban and rural forest assets are essential for most outdoor recreation pursuits, maintaining high property values, community esthetics, attracting and retaining our skilled workforce, and enhanced public health through removal of tons of pollutants and climate warming CO2. "This continued EAB mitigation campaign requires an all hands-on-deck response by both the private and public sectors if we are to preserve our essential forests for present and future generations." Fessler encouraged persons and organizations to support ROOTS. He noted additional information is available at rootswi.org or through contacting him at fessler.e.anthony@gmail.com.