



SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

DIVISION OF RESOURCE CONSERVATION & FORESTRY

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TO: CONSERVATION DISTRICT SUPERVISORS AND EMPLOYEES

FROM: Rachel Ormseth

DATE: September 25, 2020

RE: 2021 ARBOR DAY ESSAY CONTEST

2021 marks the 44th year of the Arbor Day Essay Contest open to all 5th and 6th grade students from South Dakota. It will have been 149 years ago, in 1872 that J. Sterling Morton and the State of Nebraska sponsored and hosted the first ever Arbor Day. Over one million trees were estimated to have been planted in Nebraska on that day.

Prizes

First Place: \$125 cash award and \$150 to the winner's school

Second Place: \$100 cash award

Third Place: \$75 cash award

The South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts (SDACD) has agreed to arrange for each of the three state winners to receive an engraved plaque and the above cash prizes. Each student who enters the contest will receive a packet of honeylocust tree seeds, instructions on how to grow his/her own tree, courtesy of the South Dakota Department of Agriculture, Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry (RC&F) and a McDonald's free ice cream cone card courtesy of Leonard Management. Finally, I am attaching the certificates of achievement available for local district winners. It is a Microsoft Word document. All you need to do is type in the student's name and date and print it.

Seed Packets and Dessert Cards

Please send your requests for seed packets and ice cream cards **via email directly to me. Let me know the number of entries you had, and I will send all the materials to you.** In the email, please inform me if you intend to give packets to the teachers.

Last year some districts requested more seed packets than the participant numbers submitted to Angela. If you need more packets than you have essay participants, please tell me why in your email request for packets.

Rules

The central theme of essays should be the importance of Arbor Day and trees. Students should concentrate on why we celebrate Arbor Day in South Dakota and why it is important to plant and care for trees across the state. Students are encouraged to focus on personal experience, and to remember that originality and effectiveness are major factors in judging.

The 2021 rules sheet is available on the RC&F website at: <http://sdda.sd.gov/conservation-forestry/educational-programs/arbor-day-essay-contest/>. **Note: There is a place to stamp or type in the name and address of your conservation district on the flyer.** Please promote the contest as best you can, especially by contacting elementary schools in your district.

This will provide an opportunity to explain the contest to school officials and answer questions. You should understand that school systems are bombarded with essay and poster contests and, as a result, can be indifferent to such projects. But the fact that each student who enters will receive a packet of tree seeds to grow his/her own tree, an ice cream card, and that local recognition of the school and student winners will be arranged, should help sell the program.

Please encourage teachers not to alter essays in any way; obviously corrected or edited essays cannot be considered. Grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors should not be corrected by teachers or others at the local level. Typing is not required. A prize at the local level is optional, but encouraged. We suggest that it should not exceed \$25 in value; it would have to come from a local source.

Deadlines and Judging

Each conservation district should select a local winner and if you like, honorable mentions. We are recommending a deadline for the schools to get their essays to you, on March 26, 2021 in order to get your winning essay to Angela on April 5, 2021. Submit only the local first place winner with completed cover page for judging at the state level. The attached point scoring system, part of the Contest Rules, can be used as a more objective and uniform method of scoring essays. **Scan your local winning essay and email it to Angela Ehlers, SDACD at sdoffice@sdconservation.net by April 5, 2021.**

The panel of state contest judges includes representatives of SDACD, the Resource Conservation and Forestry Division (RCF), and persons to be selected. The judges will select the first, second, and third place winners shortly after the April 5, 2021 deadline, and will immediately notify the conservation districts that sponsored the three winners. Well in advance of local awards presentations, contact your local RC&F office or the Pierre office to request tree seed cards/ice cream cards. Be sure to indicate how many of each you will need. You might invite your local service forester to assist with the presentation of awards on or around Arbor Day which falls on Friday, April 30, 2021.

When submitting your local entries to the state contest, **please use the attached cover sheet and indicate the name of the student's teacher and how many total entries were received by your district.** This gives us an accurate figure on the grand total number of entries received which is very important for publicity purposes as the question always comes up.

The final aspect of the project is to distribute the seed packets to all students who enter the contest. This can be handled in several ways. You can visit each classroom, give a talk on the importance of planting and caring for trees, then pass out the packets. Another option is to arrange a school assembly for the elementary school fifth and sixth graders. You can also present the packets to the schools and allow teachers to distribute them. The latter takes less time, but is less personal and less effective. If you need assistance with speaking in the classroom please contact myself or one of our area service foresters.

If you have any questions or concerns, please give Rachel Ormseth a call at 605.773.3594 or Angela Ehlers at 605.895.4099.

cc: Angela Ehlers, SDACD Executive Director