

News Release

International Day for Biological Diversity 2014

Promoting tree growing in the business sector

Planting a tree is a simple task. One just needs a seedling, a shovel, a planting site, and ample sunlight and water. Growing a tree, however, is not as easy. It takes commitment to ensure that the seedlings planted will actually grow into trees.

Since 2010, Tagaytay Highlands has been growing trees under its *One Tree at a Time* initiative and as early as 1994, tree planting initiatives already began. To date, the leisure complex has nurtured 430,000 trees. On May 24, officers and employees of Tagaytay Highlands, Belle Corporation, and Highlands Prime, Inc. planted an additional 200 trees at Camp Highlands. They were joined by officials and staff of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and representatives of the diplomatic community.

The tree growing activity was part of the International Day for Biodiversity 2014 (IDB) and the global Green Wave, a tree growing and biodiversity conservation campaign that educates people around the world about the importance of biodiversity conservation. The event was organized by the Tagaytay Highlands International Golf Club, Inc. and developers Belle Corporation and Highlands Prime, Inc. and supported by ACB and DFA.

“Growing 430,000 trees in the last 20 years may not be an overwhelming number, but we believe that this simple step will have a significant impact on the future of the planet. As part of the business sector, we are happy to contribute our share in global efforts to curb the impacts of climate change and conserve biodiversity,” Mr. Willy Ocier, founder of Tagaytay Highlands and Vice Chairman of Belle Corporation, said. He added that “Each tree planted is a step closer to the company’s goal of growing one million trees in 50 years. We are on-track to grow a million trees in Tagaytay Highlands by 2044 as promised.”

The initiative started in 2010 when ACB partnered with the leisure destination for its first tree growing activity with representatives from the business sector. Because of this joint project, Tagaytay Highlands was recognized by ACB as a “Friend of Biodiversity”. Since then, Tagaytay Highlands has maintained its position as an agent of change on how it sees business.

ACB Executive Director Roberto V. Oliva expressed his appreciation to Tagaytay Highlands for investing in conservation efforts. “We are grateful to the management, staff, and members of Belle Corporation, Highlands Prime, and Tagaytay Highlands for joining us in the Green Wave Tree Growing activity. We commend Tagaytay Highlands for going greener. Your effort to plant one tree at a time will go a long way in conserving our environment. Apart from growing trees, you can promote the wise use of water and electricity, recycling and proper waste disposal. These small daily acts of green can make a big difference in our lives.”

He also encouraged members of the business sector to go beyond tree growing and other corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, and shift from CSR to CER – corporate environmental responsibility by mainstreaming or integrating biodiversity conservation and advocacy into corporate policies and operations. Private companies should now ensure that

biodiversity conservation measures are being implemented within company operations such as reduction of use of papers, conservation of water and power, ensuring biodiversity protection when developing sites, avoiding use of illegally logged wood, using environment-friendly packaging, and many more.

In the case of Tagaytay Highlands, energy conservation is another key initiative. During off-peak days, the leisure complex splits up the lighting of the street lights and turns on the lights only in the important areas to minimize electricity consumption. To reduce this further, incandescent lights have been replaced by compact fluorescent ones which cut down energy usage up to 60 percent. Likewise, the operations of heavy equipment are operated and maintained on a set schedule to minimize the electricity consumption.

Tagaytay Highlands also promotes the use of renewable resources. The exclusive complex has its own sewerage treatment plant that converts wastewater to usable water that is being used for irrigation and maintenance of Tagaytay Highlands and Midlands surrounding landscaped areas. Tagaytay Highlands is also proud of its conscious efforts in promoting its clean air campaign by means of converting its golfers' transport vehicles to liquefied petroleum gas power which is more economical and also pollutant-free.

In 2013, Tagaytay Highlands and ACB signed a memorandum of cooperation covering joint activities aimed at supporting biodiversity conservation efforts. Apart from the partnership for the annual tree growing event, ACB will also conduct a biodiversity assessment of Tagaytay Highlands. "Knowing what biological resources we have will enable us to craft better conservation programmes," Mr. Ocier said.

Photos

Photo 1: Mr. Willy Ocier, founder of Tagaytay Highlands and Vice Chairman of Belle Corporation, led the tree growing activity.

Photo 2: Kids joined the annual tree growing event

Photo 3: Tree huggers unite for One Tree at a Time

Photo 4: Mr. Jerry Tiu, president Tagaytay Highlands International Golf Club, Inc., gives a thumbs to tree growing.

Photo 5: The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, Tagaytay Highlands, Belle Corporation, and Highlands Prime, Inc. renewed their Memorandum of Cooperation for tree growing and other conservation initiatives.

Photo 6: Growing trees for the future