PRESS RELEASE

March 31, 2026
For Immediate Release

James Salmon
302.571.6409

DRBA and DCH Transform Veterans Memorial Park Entrance with 58 Native Trees

Project Supported by USDA Grant and "Branches to Chances®" Workforce Development Program

NEW CASTLE, Del. The Delaware River and Bay Authority (DRBA) and the Delaware Center for Horticulture (DCH) are proud to announce the successful completion of a major community greening project at the entrance of Veterans Memorial Park off Cherry Lane in New Castle, Delaware. Over the course of two days, staff and volunteers—including trainees from the DCH Branches to Chances® program—planted 58 native trees designed to revitalize the park's ecosystem and enhance its entrance for years to come.

"On behalf of DCH, we'd like to thank Senator Chris Coons for his help in securing this vital USDA Forest Service grant to expand the urban tree canopy in Delaware," said Joanne McGeoch, Executive Director for DCH. "With the help of this grant, we're able to prioritize tree planting efforts in areas of need while providing critical hands-on stewardship training for our Branches to Chances program participants, a second chance program that opens doors to career pathways in green jobs."

"We're pleased to partner with DCH to revitalize and enhance Veterans Memorial Park with these native species," said Joseph Gibbons, Director of Maintenance for the DRBA. "Over the past several years, the park grounds have lost nearly 30 trees either to disease or severe weather. Thankfully, DCH was able to secure these much-needed native trees to transform and further beautify the Park."

The planting featured a diverse selection of native species, including the early-spring blooms of Flowering Redbuds and Serviceberries, alongside majestic shade trees such as Sycamores, Tulip Trees, and long-lived Swamp White Oaks—some of which are documented to live up to 300 years.

A central highlight of the event was the participation of the **Branches to Chances®** trainees. This nine-week horticultural job training program empowers unemployed, underemployed, and previously incarcerated individuals by connecting them with entry-level positions in the industry. The Veterans Memorial Park project served as a real-world classroom where these individuals applied skills in landscaping and tree maintenance to improve a high-profile public space.

Over the last 40 years, DCH has planted more than 18,500 trees across New Castle County. This latest collaboration continues that mission, prioritizing low-canopy areas to help clean the air, restore the environment, and build a greener future for all Delaware residents.

About the Delaware Center for Horticulture

Since 1977, the Delaware Center for Horticulture (DCH) has worked alongside communities to transform underused and overlooked spaces into vibrant places of beauty, connection, and resilience. What began as a small volunteer-led initiative has grown into a trusted leader in urban greening, environmental education, and community revitalization throughout Wilmington and New Castle County. Our mission is to mobilize people to transform neighborhoods and communities through the power of plants. By integrating horticulture with workforce development, public health, and sustainability, we help strengthen the social fabric and create greener, more livable communities. We envision a future in which all residents are actively involved in protecting and enhancing the region's ecosystems.

About DCH Branches to Chances® program:

Branches to Chances® (BtC) is a nine-week horticultural job training program for unemployed, underemployed, those in recovery, and/or previously incarcerated individuals. Training is aimed at connecting participants with entry-level positions in the horticulture industry, such as landscaping, tree maintenance, and park maintenance. The program also includes partnering with local organizations to provide participants with counseling and trainings, build knowledge in financial and computer literacy, prepare for a job interview and workplace skills. Upon completion of this program, our staff assists participants with finding full-time employment opportunities. Since launching BtC in 2009, 117 individuals have completed the program, with two thirds securing employment after graduation.

About the Delaware River and Bay Authority

The DRBA, a bi-state governmental agency created by Compact in 1962, owns and operates the Delaware Memorial Bridge, the Cape May- Lewes Ferry, and the Forts Ferry Crossing. The DRBA also manages two airports in New Jersey (Millville Executive Airport and Cape May Airport) and three in Delaware (Wilmington Airport, Civil Air Terminal and Delaware Airpark). All DRBA operating revenues are generated through bridge, ferry and airport facilities. For more information, visit www.drba.net.