

Aggie Replant Day Participant and Community Site Surveys Fall 2013

Background

According to website, the mission of Aggie Replant states “Replant is a one-day environmental service project which strives to improve the Bryan/College Station Community, bring students together through tradition, and provide an avenue for environmental service and action through a yearly tree planting event” (<http://replant.tamu.edu/>). Replant Day, which occurred on November 16, 2013, is coordinated by the Replant committee, part of the Student Government Association at Texas A&M University. The Replant committee has worked with Student Life Studies since 2007 to assess participants’ experiences. This year, the Replant committee also worked with Student Life Studies to assess the community site representatives’ experiences.

Method and Sample

The surveys were produced using Qualtrics[®], a software program that creates web-based surveys and databases. The participant survey contained 20 quantitative questions and 11 qualitative questions. The community site evaluation survey contained 14 quantitative questions and four qualitative questions. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all of the questions. The data was analyzed using SPSS[®], a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel[®].

Student Life Studies sent out the participant survey link through email beginning November 18th to 956 students who had registered to participate in Replant Day. Non-respondents received up to three email reminder before the survey closed on December 6, 2013. Of the 956 emails sent, 214 participants responded to at least some part of the survey, yielding a 30% response rate.

Eight community site representatives (some represented multiple sites) were sent out the community site evaluation survey through email beginning November 19th. Non-respondents received up to three email reminders before the survey closed on December 6, 2013. All eight representatives responded to at least some part of the survey, yielding a 100% response rate.

Results

Results are reported as means, standard deviations (sd), and frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the question. For ease of reading, frequency percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Comparisons will be made to the previous year where applicable. Qualitative themes are reported in this report; the entire list can be found in a separate document. The results of the participants’ survey and the community sites’ evaluations will be presented separately.

Participants’ Survey

The first question asked all registered participants if they attended Replant Day after registering for it (n=212). Most (96%) said they did attend Replant Day after they registered. This is equal to last year’s response. Those who did not attend Replant Day after registering for it (n=8) were asked to explain why they decided not to participate after registering for Replant Day. Their comments mentioned having an issue with registering for training, being sick, and a time conflict.

All respondents, both those who attended this year’s event and those who did not, were asked if they planned to participate in next year’s Replant Day (n=209); 61% said yes. Additionally, 27% said maybe, and 12% said no. A related question asked respondents to indicate their agreement to the statement “I would like to participate in more environmental service projects in the future.” Thirty-six percent strongly agreed, 44% agreed, 1% were neutral, and 1% disagreed (mean=4.15, sd=.76, n=203). No one strongly disagreed with the statement.

Also all respondents were asked how they heard about Replant Day in a check all that apply option response (n=214). Sixty percent of the respondents (n=128) indicated word of mouth; the next most popular option selected was other (36%, n= 78). Thirteen percent selected social media as the means for learning about Replant Day (n=27), and 11% selected flyer (n=23). Respondents who indicated “other” were provided an opportunity to write in their response and the majority indicated they heard about Replant Day through organizations. Many also listed specific organizations and some answered e-mail.

All attending participants were asked a series of questions regarding communication about and the organization of the actual events of the day. In descending order by the 2013 mean, Table 1 indicates participants were generally positive about their experiences with communications surrounding Aggie Replant and its Kickoff. However, compared to the previous two years, more of the respondents were less positive about the efficiency of the Kickoff process and the check-in.

Aggie Replant Communications and Kickoff Statement	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2013 Mean (sd) (n=197)	2012 Mean (sd) (n=292)	2011 Mean (sd) (n=293)
Communication from Aggie Replant Members regarding Replant Day was effective	25%	50%	16%	7%	2%	3.91 (.91)	*	*
I received useful information and answers to all my questions at Kickoff.	29%	41%	21%	8%	2%	3.87 (.99)	3.59 (1.07)	4.02 (1.25)
Communication from Aggie Replant Members regarding Replant Day was timely	21%	48%	18%	11%	1%	3.78 (.94)	*	*
Check-in at Kickoff was completed within a reasonable amount of time.	24%	44%	18%	9%	5%	3.74 (1.07)	4.16 (.91)	4.46 (1.10)
The Kickoff process was efficiently organized.	18%	44%	20%	13%	5%	3.58 (1.07)	3.64 (1.01)	4.09 (1.28)

Table 1 – Kickoff
*Question Not asked

Participants were given the opportunity to recommend what would make the Kickoff process better. Sixty seven replied, and included ideas to make the check in more organized using staggered check- in times, better signage for lines and having a bigger room for check- in. Some suggested having check -in at the planting sites, and starting earlier.

The next two questions asked participants how many people were in their tree-planting group and how many trees their group planted. Table 2 and Table 3, on the next page, shows the majority of respondents were in fairly small groups (52% were in groups of 20 or less) and nearly three-fourths were in groups who planted ten or less trees (72% planted one to ten trees).

How many people were in your tree-planting group?	2013 Frequency Percent (n=197)	2012 Frequency Percent (n=293)	2011 Frequency Percent (n=316)
1 – 10	30%	34%	37%
11 – 20	22%	26%	29%
21 – 30	18%	15%	20%
31 – 40	12%	10%	7%
41 – 50	9%	5%	4%
51 and over	9%	10%	3%

Table 2 – Number of People in Your Group

How many trees did your group plant?	2013 Frequency Percent (n=197)	2012 Frequency Percent (n=291)	2011 Frequency Percent (n=317)
1 – 5	47%	36%	58%
6 – 10	25%	21%	26%
11 – 15	14%	12%	9%
16 – 20	9%	13%	3%
21 – 25	3%	7%	2%
26 and over	2%	10%	2%

Table 3 – Number of Trees Planted by Your Group

Participants were asked about their workload. Table 4 indicates that just over one-half (56%) said the workload was just about right, an increase of 17% compared to last year.

The workload was:	2013 Frequency Percent (n=197)	2012 Frequency Percent (n=293)	2011 Frequency Percent (n=316)
About right	56%	39%	82%
Too little	43%	61%	14%
Too much	1%	--	4%

Table 4 – Workload

Respondents were also asked “If you had the opportunity to plant more trees, would that make your Replant Day experience better?” Of the 197 respondents, 80% replied yes and 20% stated no. When asked if they were pleased with their planting location, 92% of the respondents replied yes, and 8% replied no (n=197). Those who replied no were given the opportunity to explain, and the majority referred to difficult or inappropriate planting locations due to soil quality or other features at the planting site.

This year’s volunteers were provided the opportunity to plant two sizes of trees; five gallon and 15 gallon trees. Participants were then asked which size of tree they prefer, and were also provided the opportunity to explain why they preferred planting the five gallon or 15 gallon tree. Seventy percent of the participants indicated no preference on tree size, 17% preferred the smaller 5 gallon trees, and 13% preferred the larger 15 gallon trees (n=197). Those who preferred the smaller tree indicated the ease of handling a small tree as the reason for their preference. Comments from those preferring the larger tree were more varied, but many indicated preferring the physical challenge presented by planting larger trees.

When asked if they were injured during Replant Day, 99% of the participants said no. Those who were injured (n=2) were then asked if they were satisfied with the care they received and both (100%) indicated they were not satisfied. Participants indicating they were not satisfied with the care they received were given the opportunity to write in a response to explain why they were not satisfied; one response indicated getting a lot of bug bites and that bug spray was not available, the other response indicated “sdf”.

Participants were also asked about their expectations. Table 5 illustrates over two thirds (67%) felt Replant Day met their expectations, a 10% improvement over last year. Also, compared to the previous year, there was a 12% decrease in the number of respondents who felt Replant Day did not meet their expectation.

Participating in Replant Day 2013	2013 Frequency Percent (n=196)	2012 Frequency Percent (n=293)	2011 Frequency Percent (n=323)
Met my expectations	67%	57%	65%
Did not meet my expectations	19%	31%	18%
Exceeded my expectations	14%	12%	17%

Table 5- Participants’ expectations

Those who said their expectations were not met (n=37) were provided the opportunity to explain their response, and 34 participants took the time to provide a comment. There were several participants indicating they wanted to plant more trees or there was not enough work. This caused many to feel it was a waste of time. Others mentioned Replant Day being unorganized, directions and instructions being unclear, and the Kickoff taking longer than the time to plant the trees.

When asked if they had participated in Replant Day before, 24% said yes (n=48) and 77% said no (n=156), which was similar to the previous year. Those who had been involved before were asked to indicate their agreement to the statement “Replant Day 2013 was an improvement over a previous year that I participated in Replant Day.” Two percent strongly agreed, 46% agree, 28% were neutral, 15% disagreed, and 9% strongly disagreed (mean=3.17, sd=1.02, n=46). These results are also similar to the previous year.

Participants were asked what they thought was the best part of Replant Day. The most frequent comments included hanging out with friends, helping the environment, learning how and getting to plant trees and giving back to the community.

When asked what they would improve about Replant Day, 121 participants provided a wide range of responses. Many expressed wanting more trees, work, or better distribution of the work so participants would spend more time planting trees. Other comments included being more organized, and providing better instructions about planting and communication about the event in general. A few commented about needing more shovels and dirt and improving the knowledge and friendliness of the Replant staff.

Community Site Evaluations

The opening question of the community site evaluation asked if the respondent was responsible for multiple community planting sites. Seventy one percent (n=5) of the respondents indicated yes, and 29% (n=2) indicated no. One respondent did not answer the question.

The next four questions inquired about the site representative’s satisfaction in their interactions with the Aggie Replant student organizers and volunteers. Data displayed on Table 6, on the next page, indicates positive interactions with the volunteers and the timeliness of the communication with the organizers. However, the comments are slightly less positive regarding the efficiency of the communication with the organizers.

Satisfaction with Aggie Replant organizers and volunteers: Please indicate your level of agreement-	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2013 Mean (sd) (n=8)
Volunteers were respectful of you	63%	38%	-	-	-	4.63 (.52)
Volunteers were respectful of the property	63%	38%	-	-	-	4.63 (.52)
Communication with Aggie Replant student organizers was timely	50%	50%	-	-	-	4.5 (.54)
Communication with Aggie Replant Student organizers was efficient	38%	50%	12.5%	-	-	4.25 (.71)

Table 6 - Satisfaction with organizers and volunteers

The site representatives were also asked if the volunteers arrived on time. Seventy one percent answered yes (n=5) and 29% stated no (n=2). One respondent did not answer this question.

When asked if the respondents received all the trees requested for their site, 75% stated yes (n=6) and 25% stated no (n=2). They were also asked if the trees were planted in a timely manner; 88% (n=7) answered yes, and 13% (n=1) answered no. Site representatives were then asked about their level of agreement with the statement “I was satisfied with the quality of trees planted on the property “. Thirty-eight percent strongly agreed, 50% percent agreed, and 13% remained neutral regarding the quality of the trees planted on their property. None disagreed or strongly disagreed (mean =4.25, sd= .70, n=8).

Similar to the student participant’s survey, the site representatives were asked if their Replant Day experience met their expectations. As indicated below in Table 7, all found the experience met or exceeded their expectations.

The Replant Day Experience 2013	Frequency Percent (n=8)
Exceeded my expectations	63%
Met my expectations	38%
Did not meet my expectations	0%

Table 7- Site representatives’ expectations

Site representatives were also asked to provide input about the best part of their Aggie Replant Day experience. Six of them responded and primarily provided compliments about the student volunteers’ behavior and expressed enjoyment interacting with the students. Again, like in the participant survey, these respondents were also asked to provide information about something they would improve about the Aggie Replant Day. One of the respondents provided recommendations in significant detail regarding the tree planting and the volunteer to tree ratio, and others commented on training of the volunteers, tree selection and quality.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Replant Day participants were generally positive about the event. They enjoyed working with their organization and/or friends, giving back to the community, and planting trees. Likewise, the site representatives found the volunteers respectful and enjoyed working with them.

Participants also shared feedback regarding opportunities for improvement for future Replant Days. Many participants felt there was not enough work for everyone and that it did not take them long to plant their trees. The Replant committee may want to look at adding more trees to be planted or limiting the number of participants to create a better workload for those involved. The site representatives responded similarly to the participants, but also indicated that more tree plant training for the volunteers may be useful.

The enthusiasm for the Kickoff event continues to decrease from previous years. The Replant Committee is encouraged to look at changes made from last year's Kickoff to this year and see what improvements could be made in efficiency and timeliness. Based on comments from participants, a few suggestions would be to hold it in a larger venue, stagger the check-in times, posting line placements, and even checking in at the plant sites. Some improvement also seems needed regarding communication to participants before and during the registration process about how to register and what to expect for the Kickoff. The site representatives also noted some late arrivals from the volunteers, and indicated the efficiency was a bit lacking.

Aggie Replant should celebrate this event as a good opportunity to introduce or reinforce the idea of community service and conservation. Most participants indicated that they would participate in other environmental projects in the future, and provided email addresses for future contact. Similarly, the site representatives provided recommendations for addressing more sites during next year's event.

The Replant committee may want to consider looking at opportunities further assess student learning during the event. Perhaps include pre-reflection and reflection for participants during the event. Why did they volunteer to do this? What impact do they think it will have on the community? Why is it important? What did they learn about themselves, others, and the organization? There would probably be a few logistical areas to consider, such as training for student leaders to facilitate discussions or for all students to come back to a specific location. Any further added activities added to the Kickoff may actually impede the success of event, so careful consideration on how to implement this is certainly warranted

The Replant committee is encouraged to read all the qualitative comments. The report provides common themes but the full comments will provide a deeper understanding of participants' experiences, and many include thoughtful and specific input. The site representative's qualitative comments also offer ideas for improvement that the Replant committee may want to consider when planning next year's event.

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