

Aggie Replant Day Participant and Community Site Surveys Fall 2015

Background

According to its 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 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 and since 2013 to assess the community site representatives’ experiences.

Replant Day was originally to be held on October 24, 2015, but due to inclement weather the event was postponed until November 15, 2015. Like last year, the Replant committee decided to limit the number of participant registrants in effort to improve the volunteer to tree to-be-planted ratio and overall participant satisfaction with the event. Due to the change of event date, however, the number of registered volunteers decreased 44%, from 412 volunteers to 229, and represented 42% fewer than the 395 volunteers registered for the event in 2014.

Method and Sample

The surveys were produced using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys and databases. The participant survey contained 21 quantitative questions and six qualitative questions. The community site evaluation survey contained 11 quantitative questions and five 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 16th to 220 students who had registered to participate in Replant Day. Non-respondents received up to three email reminders before the survey closed on November 24, 2015. Of the 220 emails sent, 70 participants responded to at least some part of the survey, yielding a 32% response rate.

Four community site representatives (some represented multiple sites) were sent the community site evaluation survey through email beginning November 16th. Non-respondents received up to three email reminders before the survey closed on November 24, 2015. All of the four 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 displayed 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=70). All (100%) said they did attend Replant Day after they registered. This is slightly better than last year’s 98% response.

All respondents, were asked if they planned to participate in next year’s Replant Day (n=69); 61% said yes, slightly less than last year’s 63% of respondents. Additionally, 23% said maybe, and 16% said they would be graduating and could not participate next year.

Respondents were asked how they heard about Replant Day in a check all that apply option response (n=69). The most popular selection was word of mouth, selected by 46% of the respondents; the next most popular option selected was other (30%). Eight percent selected flyer and 17% selected social media as the means for learning about Replant Day. 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 and previous involvement.

When asked if they had participated in Replant Day before, 67% of the 69 responders said no and 33% said yes, compared to last year’s 87% responding as first time and 13% as repeat participants. Those who had been involved before were asked to indicate their agreement to the statement “Replant Day 2015 was an improvement over a previous year that I participated in Replant Day.” 5% strongly agreed, 68% agreed, 27% disagreed and none strongly disagreed (mean= 2.77, sd=.53, n=22). Last year, 27% strongly agreed, 46% agree, 27% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed when asked that same question.

All attending participant respondents were asked a series of questions regarding communication about and the organization of the actual events of the day. In descending order by mean, Table 1 indicates participants were positive about their experiences with communications surrounding Aggie Replant and its Kickoff.

Aggie Replant Communications and Kickoff Statement	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2015 Mean (sd) [n]	2014 Mean (sd) [n]
Communication from Aggie Replant Members regarding Replant Day was effective	40%	60%	--	--	3.40 (.49) [60]	3.43 (.57) [76]
I received useful information and answers to all my questions at Kickoff.	36%	64%	--	--	3.36 (.48) [61]	3.35 (.68) [78]
Check-in at Kickoff was completed within a reasonable amount of time.	49%	39%	10%	2%	3.36 (.73) [61]	3.54 (.53) [78]
Communication from Aggie Replant Members regarding Replant Day was timely	34%	61%	5%	--	3.30 (.56) [61]	3.32 (.70) [78]
I enjoyed the atmosphere at the Kickoff.	34%	59%	5%	2%	3.26 (.63) [61]	*
The Kickoff process was efficiently organized.	32%	58%	10%	--	3.22 (.61) [60]	3.36 (.62) [78]
I enjoyed the entertainment at offered during the Kickoff.	30%	55%	12%	3%	3.12 (.74) [60]	*

Table 1 – Communications and Kickoff

*Question not asked in previous years

Participants were given the opportunity to recommend what would make the Kickoff process better. Twenty replied, and some common themes included having a different larger location, more clarity about instruction and the process, and providing food and drinks. They were also asked about whether the Replant staff instructions

regarding how to plant a tree was helpful. Of the 59 who responded, 48% strongly agreed, 51% agreed and 2% disagreed that the instructions were helpful. No one strongly disagreed (mean=3.44, sd=.60).

The next set of questions asked participants how many people were in their tree-planting group, their perception of the workload and how many trees the participant personally planted. Table 2 shows that a majority of respondents were in groups of twenty or less, compared to approximately two-thirds of respondents in previous years. Table 3 and 4 show that the majority found the workload this year about right, personally planting one to two trees each.

How many people were in your tree-planting group?	2015 Frequency Percent (n=59)	2014 Frequency Percent (n=77)	2013 Frequency Percent (n=197)	2012 Frequency Percent (n=293)
1 – 10	41%	47%	30%	34%
11 – 20	41%	26%	22%	26%
21 – 30	7%	10%	18%	15%
31 – 40	5%	12%	12%	10%
41 – 50	7%	4%	9%	5%
51 and over	--	1%	9%	10%

Table 2 – Number of people in your group

The workload was:	2015 Frequency Percent (n=59)	2014 Frequency Percent (n=77)	2013 Frequency Percent (n=197)	2012 Frequency Percent (n=293)
About right	88%	86%	56%	39%
Too little	9%	12%	43%	61%
Too much	3%	3%	1%	--

Table 3 – Workload

How many trees did you personally plant?	2015 Frequency Percent (n=59)	2014 Frequency Percent (n=76)
1 – 2	66%	79%
3 – 5	32%	18%
6 – 9	--	1%
10 and over	--	1%
None	2%	--

Table 4: Trees planted

Respondents were also asked “If you had the opportunity to plant more trees, would that make your Replant Day experience better?” Of the 58 respondents, 67% replied yes and 33% stated no; 3% more responded yes this year than in 2014. When asked if they were pleased with their planting location, 97% of the 59 respondents replied yes, and 3% replied no, similar to last year’s responses. Those who replied no were given the opportunity to explain, and the responses were that the location was too residential and the poor soil quality made planting trees difficult.

When asked if they were injured during Replant Day, 98% of the participants said no. The participant who was injured (n=1) was then asked if they were satisfied with the care they received and they indicated unsure. The participant was given the opportunity to write in a response to explain why, but no response was given.

Participants were also asked about their expectations. Table 5 illustrates nearly three quarters (73%) felt Replant Day met their expectations, a 6% improvement over last year. Also, compared to the previous year, there was a 14% increase in the number of respondents who felt Replant Day exceeded their expectations and a 12% decrease in those indicating it did not meet their expectations.

Participating in Replant Day 2014	2015 Frequency Percent (n=60)	2014 Frequency Percent (n=77)	2013 Frequency Percent (n=196)	2012 Frequency Percent (n=293)
Met my expectations	58%	73%	67%	57%
Exceeded my expectations	32%	21%	14%	12%
Did not meet my expectations	10%	7%	19%	31%

Table 5- Participants' expectations

Those who said their expectations were not met (n=6) were provided the opportunity to explain their response, and five took the time to provide a comment. Responses indicated workload being too much or too little and the timing of the event. One indicated he or she thought this was the Bastrop planting event.

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

When asked what they would improve about Replant Day, 31 participants provided responses. Many expressed the need for clearer instructions, and being able to sign up as an organization to be at the same site. Other comments included having t-shirts and bug spray.

Community Site Evaluations

The opening question of the community site evaluation asked if the respondent was responsible for multiple community planting sites. Fifty percent (n=2) of the respondents indicated no, and 50% (n=2) indicated yes.

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 efficiency of the communication with the organizers. Responses improved from 2014 regarding the timeliness of the communication with the organizers.

Satisfaction with Aggie Replant organizers and volunteers: Please indicate your level of agreement-	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2015 Mean (sd) (n=4)	2014 Mean (sd) (n=7)
Volunteers were respectful of you	75%	25%	-	-	3.75 (.50)	3.86 (.38)
Volunteers were respectful of the property	75%	25%	-	-	3.75 (.50)	3.86 (.38)
Communication with Aggie Replant Student organizers was efficient	50%	50%	-	-	3.50 (.58)	3.57 (.54)
Communication with Aggie Replant student organizers was timely	50%	50%	-	-	3.50 (.58)	3.29 (.49)

Table 6 - Satisfaction with organizers and volunteers

The site representatives were also asked if the volunteers arrived on time. Sixty-seven percent answered yes (n=2) and 33% stated no (n=1).

When asked if the respondents received all the trees requested for their site, 75% stated yes (n=3) and 25% responded that they had not (n=1). They were also asked if the trees were planted in a timely manner; and 100% responded yes. 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.” Fifty percent strongly agreed, 25% percent agreed, and 25% disagreed. None strongly disagreed (mean =3.25, sd= .96, n=4).

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	2015 Frequency Percent (n=4)	2014 Frequency Percent (n=7)	2013 Frequency Percent (n=8)
Exceeded my expectations	50%	57%	63%
Met my expectations	50%	43%	38%
Did not meet my expectations	0%	0%	0%

Table 7- Site representatives’ expectations

The site representatives were asked if they would recommend participation in Aggie Replant to other organizations and individuals and 100% (n=4) responded yes.

Site representatives were also asked to provide input about the best part of their Aggie Replant Day experience. The three that responded complimented the student volunteers’ enthusiasm, expressed enjoyment from interacting with the students, and the quality of the trees planted. Again, like in the participant survey, these respondents were also asked to provide information about something they would improve about the Aggie Replant Day. Responses touched on planning and communication with the organization. Another commented on the tree selection process.

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. Participants reported being satisfied with the amount of work, and amount of trees to plant, which indicates the volunteer registration limits still effectively improved the participants' satisfaction over previous years, and that the decrease in volunteers from postponing the event did not have an effect on participant enjoyment. The site representatives also were generally satisfied, found the volunteers respectful, and enjoyed working with them.

Although participants indicated improved satisfaction with the event, they continue to recommend planting more trees and working longer at the sites. The Replant committee may want to look at adding more trees to be planted or perhaps expand the types of planting or environmental work offered to the sites to further improve the workload for volunteers.

Kickoff was reported as running smoothly this year, although participants indicated the event could benefit from more energy and enthusiasm. The tree plant training provided by the Replant staff was found beneficial by the volunteers. Based on comments from participants, a few suggestions to improve Kickoff would be to provide clearer communication about being released to work at the sites and offer more food and drinks to the volunteers.

The Replant committee may want to consider looking at opportunities to 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 respondents' experiences, and a few include thoughtful and specific input. The report should also be shared with interested stakeholders, including those who participated in the event.

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