



NEWS RELEASE

Note: Arbor Day is April 27, 2007

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What does freedom sound like? Like the wind in the trees.

Arbor Day digest: Paul Hemmer Jr. has planted 6,971 Freedom Trees

Developer's goal is 4 million Freedom Trees to remember 4 million slaves

CINCINNATI (April 24, 2007) -- You can hear the sound of freedom this Arbor Day as the wind whispers through 6,971 trees planted in 28 Freedom Groves in Ohio and Kentucky.

Those 6,971 trees commemorate the lives of 6,971 American slaves. This Arbor Day, the developer who conceived of the Freedom Trees project envisions 4 million trees planted along the Underground Railroad route through America to commemorate the lives of 4 million slaves and freedom fighters during the Civil War. The newly planted Freedom Groves will recreate the cool, shadowy groves of trees where the men, women and children who fled slavery sought shelter and safe haven as they traveled the Underground Railroad to freedom. Each tree planted through the Freedom Trees project benefits the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, located on the north bank of the Ohio River in Cincinnati.

Every day is Arbor Day for Paul Hemmer Jr., president and CEO of the Paul Hemmer Companies. He and his wife, Mary, conceived of the Freedom Trees project and brought it to reality. Their goal is reforestation, commemoration and fundraising to support the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. The proceeds of the sale of each tree are donated to the Freedom Center's endowment fund.

The first Freedom Grove was created in 2003 when 200 native hardwood trees commemorating the lives of slaves were planted in an abandoned interstate road parcel along Interstate-75 in Ft. Mitchell, Ky. Ft. Mitchell is Mr. Hemmer's native city and the location of Paul Hemmer Companies' headquarters.

The idea dates back several years earlier, however. Working with professional landscape and tree specialists, Mary and Paul Hemmer Jr. began developing plans in 1999 to create Freedom Groves that would consist of native hardwood tree species. They purchased a 210-acre farm near the Ohio River in Hebron, Ky., and started their nonprofit Sand Run Nursery & Preserve. There, in early 2000, they began growing tree seedlings.

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"Arbor Day has special meaning for us," said Paul Hemmer Jr. "As a developer, reforestation is very important to me. With the Freedom Trees project, Mary and I envision 10,000 groves of hardwood trees planted as living memorials to the men, women and children who lived in slavery in this country. We are thrilled to see the progress made so far on the Freedom Trees project. It is a journey, though, and we still dream of planting 4 million trees along the Underground Railroad. To honor freedom, commemorate the lives of slaves and support the Freedom Center are meaningful goals for us. "

"This journey of Mary and Paul Hemmer Jr. to create Freedom Groves through America is rooted in their deep respect for people and the land," said Dr. Spencer Crew, President of the Freedom Center. "They have shown the leadership and perseverance in their mission that reflects the traits of all freedom fighters, from those who created the Underground Railroad in this country to those fighting for freedom around the globe today."

Since that first tree planting in 2003, 27 additional Freedom Groves have been planted for a total of 6,971 trees in the past 3½ years. The Freedom Groves vary in size, containing as many as 1,200 trees to as few as 16 trees, but the recommended size of a grove is from 200 to 600 trees on about an acre of land. The groves are located wherever land is available – near industrial parks, office parks, schools, colleges, urban areas and rural areas in Kentucky and Ohio. A permanent monument marks each site as a Freedom Grove.

Trees growing at the Hemmers' Sand Run Nursery and available for planting in Freedom Groves include oaks, ash, maple, walnut, buckeye, pecan, flowering dogwood and redbud.

"Our focus is native hardwoods – the kind that, if we lived here two centuries ago, we would have seen as we walked through the woods," Mr. Hemmer said.

The goal since the project's inception has been to have the Freedom Groves radiate out from the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center on the Cincinnati riverfront along routes that were used by slaves during their escape from freedom. Freedom Grove sites are determined by the advisory board of landscape and park professionals.

Freedom Tree sponsorships are available to individuals, groups and corporations. The cost for a tree sponsorship is \$75. The proceeds of the sale of each tree are donated to the Freedom Center's endowment fund, used for the Center's programming and operation. (\$25 of the donation is tax deductible.) Contributors who buy trees receive certificates detailing the location of the Freedom Grove in which their trees will be planted.

Paul Hemmer Jr. serves on the National Advisory Board of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. His commitment to reforestation was recognized in 2001 with an award from the Kentucky Urban & Community Forestry Council.

To order Freedom Trees for planting or for more information, visit www.freedomtrees.com or contact the Paul Hemmer at 859-341-8300, or by mail at the Paul Hemmer Companies, 250 Grandview Drive, Ft. Mitchell, KY 41017, by visiting www.paulhemmer.com.

Arbor Day

National Arbor Day is celebrated annually on the last Friday in April, which is April 27, 2007. Nebraska was the first state to celebrate the planting of trees by declaring an Arbor Day in April 1874. Other states followed, each setting their own days to celebrate trees, and several U.S. presidents proclaimed a national Arbor Day on the last Friday in April. Arbor Day has now spread beyond the United States and is observed in many other countries.

National Underground Railroad Freedom Center

Situated in Cincinnati, Ohio, on the banks of the Ohio River, the Freedom Center celebrates the legacy of courage and multicultural cooperation embodied in the story of the Underground Railroad. The Freedom Center uses a wide array of exhibits to educate the public about the historic and continuing struggle to establish universal freedom in both the U.S. and around the world. For additional information, contact 513.333.7500 or visit www.freedomcenter.org.

Paul Hemmer Companies

Founded in 1921, Paul Hemmer Companies is one of the Cincinnati region's largest real estate development, building and construction services firms, with projects throughout the United States. Deloitte, *The Cincinnati Enquirer* and Cincinnati USA have ranked Paul Hemmer Companies the 57th largest and fastest growing privately held company in Greater Cincinnati. Specializing in design/build industrial, commercial, and retail construction, Paul Hemmer Companies also offers site selection, tenant improvements and complete building care services. It has developed nearly 15 million sq. ft. of industrial, commercial and retail property. In 2006, Paul Hemmer Companies earned over \$176 million in revenue among its more than 60 construction and development entities. Headquartered in Ft. Mitchell, Ky., Hemmer also has offices in Chicago. Visit www.paulhemmer.com.

Sand Run Nursery & Preserve

Sand Run Nursery & Preserve is a 210-acre nursery, preserve and education center in Northern Kentucky. Founded by Mary and Paul Hemmer, Jr., to promote urban reforestation efforts, including industrial development projects of Paul Hemmer Companies, 160 acres of the property have been dedicated to woodland plantings, animal habitats and trails. Tens of thousands of native hardwood seedlings have been planted for later transplantation elsewhere. Visit www.freedomtrees.com

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