

Observer Ethical Awards 2015 winners: Andover Trees United

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“Mighty oaks from little acorns grow” is a phrase nobody understands better than [Andover Trees United](#). Established in 2011 by teacher Wendy Davis, the project’s aim was to ensure that every young person in the Hampshire town and surrounding area planted a tree in their school nursery bed, later moving it to a dedicated woodland space. “We wanted it to be something that would bring together the community,” says Oonagh Pope, 63, a retired teacher who helped Davis plant the very first batch of saplings at Portway Junior School. Since then 4,000 trees have been planted in Andover’s seven-acre Harmony Wood, and things show no sign of slowing down.

More than 25 Andover schools are currently involved in the scheme, with children ranging from primary to sixth-form level. Although nothing would have been possible without a strong team of school support gardeners, the children have been an essential part of the process, mucking in on everything from logo design to seeking out the newest planting spots. Sebastian Duff, 11, regularly gives presentations and attends meetings to engage more children in the project. “I know how much impact it has on the climate,” he says. “This is a project for kids, and we’re very motivated by it.”

Andover Trees is also involved in the [United Nations Environment Programme’s](#) (UNEP) global initiative Plant-for-the-Planet, which is striving to reduce CO₂ emissions to zero by 2050. If the way they have flourished in the community is anything to go by, Andover Trees United is on target to plant 10,000 trees in the next 10 years. The next venture is to teach children about the environment and its abundant wildlife in a specially designed woodland centre.

“It is clear that they want to look after the local environment and the planet. The children are very aware of the future and the importance of the oxygen that trees produce,” explains Pope. “They are our best ambassadors.”