

Fruit trees bring more opportunity for Grow Dat

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Tulane student-athletes who usually spend a Thursday studying or practicing their sport spent the morning on Thursday (March 29) planting satsuma trees alongside middle school students from Langston Hughes Academy at Grow Dat Youth Farm in City Park.



As part of Final Four week, Tulane student-athlete Brian Lozes, right, of the men's cross country team, works with a middle school student planting a satsuma tree at Grow Dat Youth Farm. (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Members of various Green Wave teams ? men's tennis, women's swimming and diving, women's bowling, football, men's basketball, women's basketball, and men's and women's cross country/track and field ? helped plant 32 of the native Louisiana citrus trees.



Green Wave football player Josh Smith, right, helps middle school students prepare the soil for planting.

“We are planting 32 fruit trees, which represent the number of men's basketball NCAA Division I tournament teams in the third round, which will lead to the lasting legacy of the [Final Four](#) in New Orleans,” said Bernard Franklin, an executive vice president with the NCAA.

Tulane President Scott Cowen told the middle school students, “The future of our city is in your hands.” Students who are involved in the urban farm project are learning “life, leadership and business skills” that will help them be successful in the future, he said.

Johanna Gilligan, co-director of the Grow Dat Youth Farm, said the urban farm has the goal of growing and harvesting 10,000 pounds of vegetables and fruit by July of this year. “A lot of the work is done by young people like you,” she told the young students.

Also taking part in the morning of community work was [Wade Mason](#), of the Tulane class of 1999, who wore number 0 on the Green Wave basketball team.

“I remember being that age,” Mason said, gesturing to the group of student athletes, “and representing Green Wave basketball.” Mason, now helping coach at the University of Oklahoma, said he leapt at the chance to come back to his hometown for the Final Four.

In addition to Tulane and the NCAA, the event, dubbed “Growing Opportunity,” was supported by Opportunity Nation, a national organization seeking to empower disadvantaged youth.