

2011



THEN &  
NOW

BENJAMIN J. MARTIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
FAYETTEVILLE, NC  
2012 LEGACY TREE FUND GRANT



#### THEN:

On April 16, 2011, an EF-3 strength tornado tracked across Fayetteville and caused more than \$5 million in damage to Benjamin J. Martin Elementary School. In addition to the damage done to the building, the tornado destroyed trees around the school and wiped out the tree line at back of the school that provided some privacy from neighboring lots.

As the school rebuilt inside, Gloria Thomas Lengel, then Director of Cumberland County Schools' GoGreen Initiative, applied for a Legacy Tree Fund Grant from the North Carolina Urban Tree Council (NCUFC) to help plant new trees outside.

In 2012, NCUFC awarded Benjamin Martin Elementary School a \$4,695 Legacy Tree Fund grant to plant 30 large trees around campus.

"We went to a local nursery to pick the trees we wanted in winter, then we planted the trees all around the campus in the spring," said Thomas Lengel.

"The Ben Martin Elementary School project upheld the purpose of the NCUFC Legacy Tree Fund – to provide financial assistance to communities across North Carolina for tree-planting projects that help educate North Carolina citizens about the importance of trees," said NCUFC Executive Director Leslie Moorman. "We were also proud to help the community heal from the tornado."



## NOW:

Ten years later, the trees are thriving.

"The key to the trees' success was we were able to space and plant them far apart to give them room to grow," said Thomas Lengel.

The trees are providing privacy, shade, and mental health benefits to the school's students and staff. Research proves Views from cafeteria, classroom, and dormitory windows with greater quantities of trees and shrubs were associated with more positive standardized test scores, graduation rates, percentages of students planning to attend a four-year college, and fewer occurrences of criminal behavior.

"I would love to see schools planting more trees – especially deciduous trees," said Thomas Lengel. She admits the schools do have to do some maintenance as the trees grow, but the effort gives so many more benefits. "Trees can keep buildings cool and when schools can open their windows fresh air can flow in."

Each year, the North Carolina Urban Forest Council awards Legacy Tree Fund grants to community groups, civic associations, block clubs, garden clubs, and other non-profit organizations for urban forestry projects involving tree planting. Since 2011 The Legacy Tree Fund has helped plant thousands of trees in communities across North Carolina.

