

May 7, 2010

### **Art of Conservation Students Plant Trees at Schools near Volcanoes National Park**

*Musanze, Rwanda* – The week of May 3 through 7, 200 primary level 5 students attending Rushubi and Nyange I primary schools in Musanze District planted trees on their school grounds to help prevent soil erosion, create animal habitat, and beautify the schools. All the students are participants in a year-long extracurricular conservation education program run by Art of Conservation (AoC), a non-profit organization dedicated to educating Rwandan youth living near Volcanoes National Park about health and conservation issues.

Each morning for four days, an AoC class of 50 students planted a selection of agroforestry tree species seedlings in woodlots at their schools. Before planting trees, AoC teachers explained the importance of planting trees and demonstrated how to properly plant and care for a seedling so that it might grow into a healthy, mature tree. The children will be responsible for tending their seedlings and school administrators will ensure security so that seedlings are not stolen or eaten by domestic animals.

"Rainforests cover only about 6% of Earth's surface and are extremely diverse, containing over half of all known animal and plant species," says AoC Director Julie Ghrist. "Our work with the communities living just outside of the Volcanoes National Park borders includes doing our best to keep this incredibly important ecosystem intact. We are continuing to look for indigenous tree species seedlings for our students to learn about and plant. Farming in this hilly country causes topsoil erosion, but trees, when planted strategically, can prevent much soil loss, which helps the land be more productive. By having our students plant trees, we hope they will learn to appreciate the great importance trees have in their lives, and also in the lives of wild animal species which need natural places and corridors for their safety and habitat."

The tree-planting exercise is part of a series of classes AoC is devoting to basic lessons on agronomy. Earlier in the year students learned about good health habits that can help them to stay healthy and prevent the spread of germs to other people and animals. Later in the year they will focus on more in-depth studies of some of the animal species that inhabit Volcanoes National Park, such as mountain gorillas, forest buffaloes, and

golden monkeys.

**About Art of Conservation**

Art of Conservation, Inc. works in poor rural communities bordering Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda, teaching schoolchildren and other community members about the importance of maintaining a healthy environment for both people and animals and instilling them with an understanding and respect for themselves, their peers, and the natural world. Art of Conservation approaches learning through a unique method, using visual, auditory, and performance arts to teach lessons and inspire creativity in its students. In partnership with other organizations which attend directly to the well-being of the Volcanoes National Park ecosystem and its resident mountain gorillas, Art of Conservation seeks to fill the education gap in the local communities through its activities. More information: [www.art-of-conservation.com](http://www.art-of-conservation.com) <<http://www.art-of-conservation.com/>>

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