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Branstad to plant Earth Day tree at C.B. school

By JOE ARTERBURN

Nonpareil Staff Writer

Gov. Terry E. Branstad will visit Washington Elementary School in Council Bluffs Monday for a tree-planting celebration of Earth Day.

Branstad is expected to arrive at the school at 2 p.m. and will stay about an hour, said his press secretary, Richard Vohs. Students will explain their planned Earth Week activities to Branstad before the tree is planted, Vohs said.

The ceremony is part of Branstad's commitment encouraging Iowans to plant 3 million trees, one for each Iowan, Vohs said.

Tree-planting, he said, "is something very visible he can do to promote the environmental ethic." He said planting trees addresses air, water and soil conservation as well as improving the beauty of the state.

Branstad is encouraging schools to participate in the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Trees for Kids program and to incorporate DNR educational curricula into classroom work.

In other Earth Day activities in Council Bluffs, 100 to 120 St. Albert Junior High School students are scheduled to participate in a clean-up of Council Bluffs streets

later this week, according to city Sanitarian Donn Dierks.

Weather permitting, the students will probably target areas along Madison, Woodbury and Franklin avenues, Dierks said.

Leadership Council Bluffs members initiated Operation Clean-Up as its 1990 community-improvement project.

Dierks said collection of waste oil, old paint and car batteries will be held next fall and he has already enlisted about 30 local businesses as collection points for rechargeable nickel-cadmium and silver-oxide batteries, the small ones used in calculators, cameras and other electronic gear. Those batteries, he said, contain significant amounts of mercury, which "we are trying to keep out of the waste stream."

Alkaline and carbon batteries, the traditional batteries used in flashlights and other such items, contain little mercury and are considered safe for landfills.

Dierks said the city also plans to initiate an Adopt-A-Street program, in which organizations would clean up and maintain designated city streets.

He said he hopes to start an in-house paper-recycling effort at City Hall and is encouraging city offices to buy recycled paper products.

Grand jury begins shooting probe