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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ReLeaf Michigan Announces 2020-2022 Michigan Big Tree Hunt Contest Winners

November 2, 2022 – Ann Arbor, MI – ReLeaf Michigan, a state-wide non-profit tree planting and education organization, celebrated the conclusion of its 15th biennial Michigan Big Tree Hunt contest on Saturday, October 15th, with an awards ceremony at the Chippewa Nature Center in Midland. The contest, which awards participants for identifying the biggest trees in Michigan, began in the spring of 2020 and concluded at the end of the summer of 2022.

More than 650 entries were sent in from people across the state, including 79 of Michigan's 83 counties. The winning entry for each county was verified on-site by professional arborists and foresters from throughout the state. The largest trees in the state were found in all sorts of places, including backyards, local parks, cemeteries, and hiking trails. Due to many trees being on private property, the specific location of every winning tree is kept confidential.

The closing ceremony was attended by tree enthusiasts of all ages with their families, who drove from across the state to share their appreciation of Michigan's trees. ReLeaf Michigan has been conducting the Big Tree Hunt since 1993, and many participate year after year. Lights-Forintos remembered one attendee at the ceremony, "He lowered his hand to right about his knees to show the height of their daughter when they first came to an award ceremony; now she is in college! The connection between each person and their tree, or trees in general, is clearly strong and meaningful."

This personal connection to trees was further explored this year through a research project conducted by Dr. David MacFarlane and Dr. Emily Huff of the Michigan State University Department of Forestry. A group of past Michigan Big Tree nominators were interviewed by the Michigan State research team about their connection with the tree. The team also used a terrestrial laser to scan the tree and create 3D images that include measurements! Lights-Forintos, who set up the meetings, recalls each person was "absolutely delighted" to have their tree included.

Certificates and prizes were awarded for several categories: the largest tree submitted from each county, the overall largest tree in different age groups, the largest Eastern White Pine (Michigan's state tree), and any new potential state champion trees.

The grand prize for the largest tree in the contest submitted by a Big Tree Hunter under 15 years old went to Aidan Presnell. Aidan, with help from his sister, found an Eastern cottonwood measuring 308 inches around (more than



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25 feet!), located in Washtenaw County. The grand prize for the largest tree from a Big Tree Hunter 16 or older was awarded to both Mike Antoszewski and Paul Funk, who each entered an Eastern cottonwood in Monroe County measuring 301 inches around. The grand prize for the largest Eastern White Pine was another two-way tie, with two submissions both measuring 181 inches around! One was submitted by Tom Hollis and his granddaughter Payton Rue, located in Clinton County. The other was submitted by Nicholas Hansen, located in Marquette County.

Seventeen trees submitted for the contest qualified as new potential state champion trees and were submitted for review and confirmation to the Big Tree Coordinator of the Michigan Botanical Society, Ted Reuschel. (Note: Trees already listed in the Michigan Big Tree Register before the start of the contest were not eligible for prizes.) A complete list of winners is available on www.BigTreeHunt.com.

The contest also helps discover eligible trees for the [National Register of Big Trees](#), updated every spring and fall by American Forests. Michigan currently has five registered National Champion trees. However, since nearly 200 tree species don't have any registered champions, the Big Tree Hunt is an excellent opportunity to get Michigan trees noticed nationwide.

The 2020-2022 Michigan Big Tree Hunt was made possible thanks to the support of its sponsors. The premier sponsor of the Big Tree Hunt was Nissan North America, who provided critical funding that allowed the ReLeaf Michigan team to devote resources to executing the Big Tree Hunt. Other sponsors included Consumers Energy, the Michigan DNR, ISA Michigan, the Michigan Botanical Club, the Michigan Botanical Foundation and the Michigan State University Department of Forestry.

The next Big Tree Hunt will officially begin in the spring of 2023, pending contest sponsorship. If interested in supporting the Michigan Big Tree Hunt contest, please email bigtreehunt@releafmichigan.org.

For more information about the Big Tree Hunt, including pictures and the list of winners by county, visit the ReLeaf Michigan's Big Tree Hunt webpage at BigTreeHunt.com.

About ReLeaf Michigan

ReLeaf Michigan is a statewide volunteer non-profit 501(c)(3) tree planting and education organization. Its mission is to educate the public on the value of trees and how to properly select, plant, and maintain them. Its board is made up primarily of arborists, foresters, and researchers passionate about preserving one of Michigan's most significant resources: trees.

Since 1988, ReLeaf Michigan has worked with more than 500 communities across the state, planting over 30,000 large-sized trees on public property in Michigan's cities, townships, and villages. Learn more at releafmichigan.org.



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