

NEW
CLEANS LIKE CLOROX
SMELLS LIKE *Aloha*



BUY NOW
Hawaiian Sunshine™

New at Walmart

'Poet-Trees' Take Root as Fertile Form of Everyday Expression

BY SUSIE TOMMANEY

MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2017 AT 8 A.M.



Remember last year's Tax Day flooding? Some Houstonian poet-trees project morphed into a "give a penny, take a pe

44 6 0 0

We're all getting nervous this April, an deadline to file our tax returns. The B

Tax Day floods. But not all news is bad news, and it turns out that Houstonians found a way to help through the power of the written word.

April also is National Poetry Month, and last year the Houston-based non-profit [Writers in the Schools](#) launched its first ever poet-trees initiative. It's not just a creative play on words, it's also a way to get us out of the house and down to Buffalo Bayou Park to add quotes, wishes and poems (natch) to brightly colored be-ribboned trees.

Whenever humans are added to the equation, there's no telling what will happen. We turned out in droves, to the tune of 500,000 visitors, and after the provided tags were exhausted we came up with our own plan. We wrote on the ribbons themselves, we added locks, homemade tags and even small purses filled with donations of cash.

"I think that was because of the flooding. People knew that people had lost their property or home," says Robin Reagler, WITS executive director. "People could take out or add if they could afford it. It was very sweet."

The joy is in the writing and reading, which is good because not all of last year's messages survived the rains. But Italian-born abstract expressionist and WITS board member, Nicola Parente (who we named one of Houston's [Top 10 Painters in 2014](#)), has put his mark on this collaborative project. Not only has he partnered with WITS and Buffalo Bayou Partnership, he's also managed to save many of last year's poems.

"He wants to do something with them. I'm not sure if it will be an archival project or for art projects," says Reagler, who describes the types of messages preserved. "It varied. Some are poeti
sometimes it's a wish. [The tags show
dreams of what they wanted to share

Any poetry event that draws half a million people and WITS was soon deluged with folks asking "How do we do it?"

So for this year, Reagler says they found a way to make the program national.

advertisement





Photo by Alyssa Hartgrove

"We've invited people to basically create their own poet-tree at their workplace, neighborhood, yard or park. So starting in April there will be sort of a kit you can download from our website with printable files so that you can print out your own tags," says Reagler. "It explains how to wrap the tree in ribbon so it's colorful and then you can print out a sign to explain to visitors what to do, "Take the tag, write a line, tie it to the tree."

She says they've also built an interactive map on the website and will plot the location of all the poet-trees in the United States so that people can go online and find the trees in their own city.

"The main idea is that poetry is something that it's a part of each of us. Once we grow up and get jobs and pay bills we think

poetry is for the young or people in love," says Reagler. "The idea of this project is that we all have a wish, we all have a dream, we all have special things we want to say to special people. It's part of making poetry accessible to everybody."

UPCOMING EVENTS

[Festival of Laughs featuring Mike Epps](#)

Fri., Apr. 14, 7:30pm [TICKETS](#)

[Festival of Laughs ft. Mike Epps, Sommore...](#)

Fri., Apr. 14, 10:30pm [TICKETS](#)

[Lisa Lampanelli](#)

Sat., Apr. 15, 8:00pm [TICKETS](#)

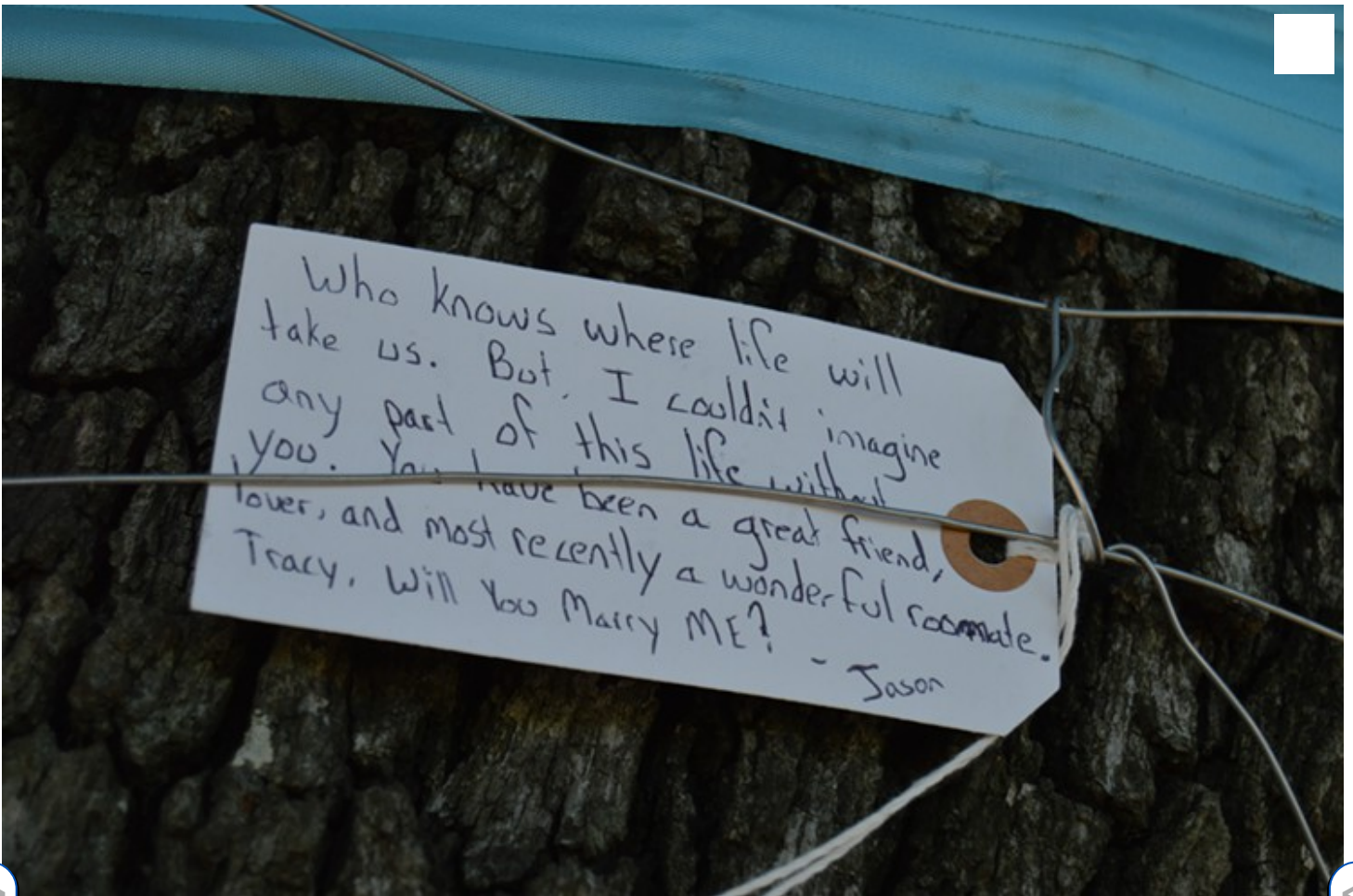
[Jeff Dunham: Perfectly Unbalanced](#)

Sun., Apr. 23, 3:00pm [TICKETS](#)

[Thunder From Down Under](#)

Tue., Apr. 25, 7:00pm [TICKETS](#)







Love was in the air last year and we know that last year's poet-trees initiative resulted in at least two marriage proposals.

Photo by Alyssa Hartgrove

As far as having special things that we want to say, we know of at least two marriage proposals that resulted from last year's poet-trees project (Tracy and Jason, sittin' in a tree). They were posted on social media, but who knows what other seeds were sewn by the project?

In addition to this year's home base (Buffalo Bayou Park), WITS also expects poet-trees at Brazos Bend Elementary (led by a WITS Youth Advisory Council member and his Boy Scouts of America troop, Woodland Park, in partnership with a local Girl Scouts of the USA troop), as well as at the H-E-B at San Felipe.

Visitors are encouraged to snap a pic  hashtag #poettree before sharing on

Ready to start your own poet-tree?  kit, or to subscribe to the blog and re April, visit witshouston.org.

Susie is a contributing writer
areas, connecting creative m