

Arboretum bears sap

the focus of the sap tapping has shifted from production to education, and the Arboretum has gotten involved in the annual ritual.

"I love everything about it,"

Bach said about the yearly festival. "I get excited when other people are excited about it."

Biology students visit the taps for lab, taking advantage of the educational opportunity.

"It's something they've never done before," Bach said. "This is a unique experience they couldn't get anywhere else."

Another new experience for this year's festival-goers is the performance of an original song by Bach, unveiled on the Tapping Day and performed both days of the festival.

"My supervisor at the Arboretum, Sarah Gainey, asked me to create a model to explain the physiological mechanism for sap flow," Bach said via e-mail. "She wanted something we could use in our Environmental Education classes to help teach young students."

Finding the right words wasn't too hard.

"As a songwriter, I have found that I am not the author of my best songs — they tend to write themselves," Bach said. "Naturally, words relating to maple sap just started to flow, pun intended."

Bach will perform the song again with Danny Vitali, Joey Buhta and Molly Roske on the final day of the festival, April 5.

Syruping lyrics

Better than your Aunt
Jemima
Though it takes a lot of
time-a
Won't you join me in my
mission?
Come enjoy the old
tradition.

— MJ Bach



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Many Minnesotans look forward to the first days of spring when they can shed their sweaters and hit the outdoors.

At the St. John's Arboretum, the beginning of spring is marked by the crowd of volunteers heading out to the Sugar Shack on the first "Tapping Day" of the season.

MJ Bach, a CSB sophomore and Arboretum employee, said the maple syruping season usually begins in early March, lasts about five weeks, ending when new buds appear on the trees — sometime in mid-April.

This year's season began on March 1, when 80 volunteers tapped 600 to 700 trees.

While Arboretum volunteers and employees typically collect the sap every day to keep it fresh, the highlight of the tapping season is the Maple Syrup Festival.

Held on two consecutive weekends, the festival is an opportunity for parents, students and children to learn about maple syruping.

The 2008 Maple Syrup Festival runs 1 to 4 p.m., March 29 and April 5. Volunteers give communities members demonstrations on sap collecting and tours of the Sugar Shack.

Members of the monastic community started tapping the trees at St. John's in 1942 due to the sugar shortage in World War II. Since then,