



# Finding New Friends for Urban Forestry

TREE CITY USA®  
BULLETIN

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*“All the world’s a stage,” wrote William Shakespeare, adding that the players on life’s stage fill many roles. In the field of urban forestry, if we ignore what other ‘actors’ in our communities might have to offer, we are sure to deprive ourselves of potential partners. Conversely, by finding new friends to help with the planting and care of community trees, our efforts can be magnified and enriched.*

It is easy to get comfortable working with our colleagues on the tree board or fellow volunteers that help plant trees. In many communities, however, this means that most of the work is done by a few people, the load becomes burdensome, and ideas grow stale. This, coupled with funding that is rarely sufficient to meet all the needs, makes it essential to expand the circle of those willing to help.

Following a study of strategies for community success conducted by the Kettering Foundation, Dr. David Mathews, head of the organization, wrote, “What stands out in the high-achieving community is not so much the characteristics of the leaders as their number...The high-achieving community had ten times more people providing leadership than communities of comparable size. This high-achieving community is ‘leaderful,’ that is, nearly everyone provides some measure of initiative. And its leaders function not as gatekeepers but as door openers, bent on widening participation.”

This leadership, along with those who follow, is found in virtually every community — but often in places not normally associated with urban forestry. Finding and enlisting these new friends will provide refreshing new talent, perspectives, willing workers and — sometimes — new sources of financial assistance.



**Arbor Day Foundation**  
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# Seeking and Working with the Non-Traditional

*Finding new friends for urban forestry requires thoughtful planning and innovative thinking. It may start with an ideation session at a tree board meeting, or as the idea of a single individual. In all cases, it includes an analysis of what groups are available that might be considered as potential partners.*

## HOW TO CATEGORIZE THE POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Potential partners have been referred to in many ways:

- Audiences
- Publics or target publics
- Demographics
- Market segments
- Collaborators

By whatever term, think about the groups in your community and how to best approach them. The late Dr. Douglas Gilbert, a pioneer in applying the practices of public relations to the natural resource professions, suggested that a good way to not overlook a group is by dividing your publics into the following categories.

### YOUR OWN GROUP

*Example:* Tree Board

#### INTERNAL PUBLICS

*Example:* fellow tree board members, city staff

#### CATALYST PUBLICS

Not internal, but because of common interests and goals these groups can be treated like internals in many ways, especially to disperse information.

*Example:* reputable tree care companies; local arborists

#### EXTERNAL PUBLICS

**NATURAL** These groups can be expected to share your interests.

*Example:* garden clubs; Friends of the Park

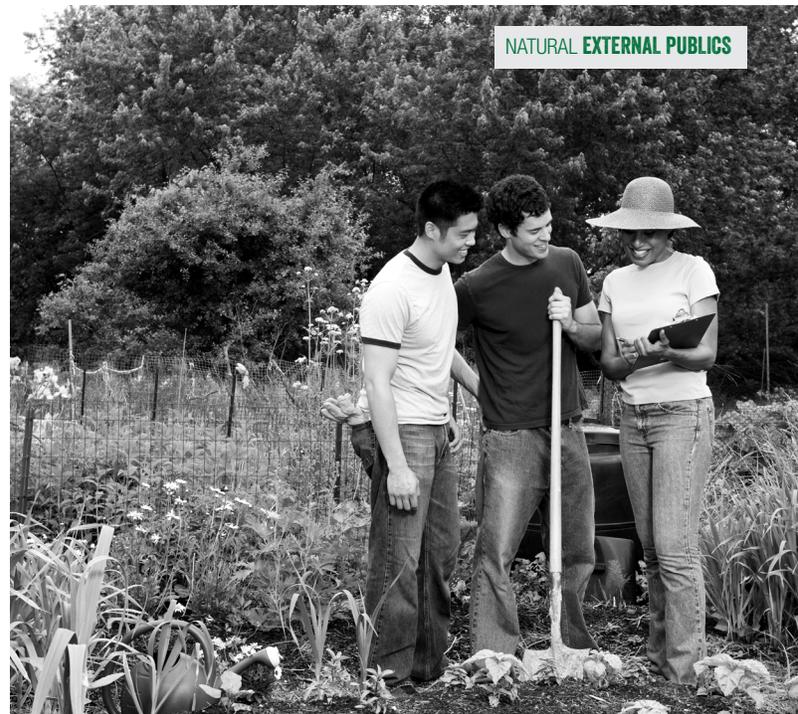
**UNNATURAL** It is not a flattering term, but it means there are no traditionally shared interests.

*Example:* Stamp collectors; motorcycle organizations

## REACHING OUT BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL

The focus in this issue of the bulletin is on external publics. The “unnatural publics,” especially, are organizations and individuals that often go unnoticed and untapped. Yet as shown on the following pages, they hold great promise for spreading interest in and support of urban forestry — and helping in many other ways. All external publics require more effort to reach and inform about urban forestry, but experience shows that there are usually individuals within these groups that are ready to assist.

External publics are more difficult to reach but can often become productive partners for urban forestry.



## MEET A MASTER

Before his retirement, the late Mike Bowman served as the first urban forester for the City of Lewiston, Idaho. In addition to conducting the city's first street tree inventory and numerous other "firsts," a highlight of Mike's tenure was the partnerships he formed to get things done. For example, a series of public service ads were produced in cooperation with local television station KLEW-TV. These informed residents how to plant, why not to top, the need for watering young trees and other important subjects. They were produced at no cost to the city's budget and Mike strategically invited elected officials to participate in the filming.

Something that made Mike so successful was that he simply liked talking with people. Even the license plate on his personal pickup truck was designed to facilitate conversations about trees. He said, "You'd be surprised how many people comment on my license plate and ask about it." Those conversations often led to recruiting volunteers or at least gaining more public support for urban forestry.

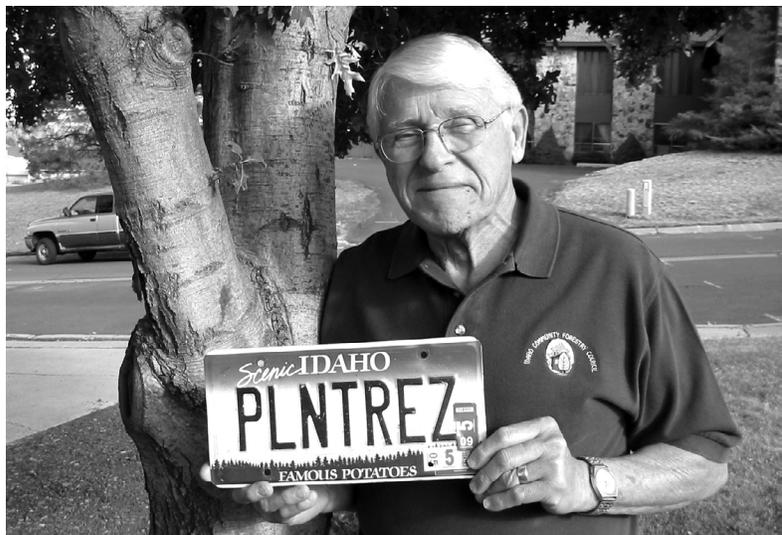
Here are some of the other ways Mike Bowman found to work with external publics:

**LEWISTON GARDEN CLUB.** Mike discovered that the club sought out projects, so each year he assisted the members in sponsoring a tree planting.

**IDAHO WOMEN IN TIMBER.** This is a group made up largely of women interested in promoting natural resource and wise forest management. As he did with the state's commodity group, the Idaho Forest Products Commission, Mike found Women in Timber to be very interested in Arbor Day and other projects usually associated with the urban side of forestry.

**AUTO DEALERSHIP.** A project was created and named "Buy a Car, Plant a Tree." During this promotion, cooperator Rogers Motors bought a tree from a local nursery and donated it to the city for each new car that was purchased.

**SCHOOLS.** Not only did Mike work closely with a number of schools in the city, he took advantage of existing program materials such as those provided in Project Learning Tree. His messages usually established a link between good urban forestry and the broader fields of forest management and agriculture since his community is highly dependent on these industries.



The late city forester Mike Bowman found ways to form numerous partnerships with groups not usually associated with urban forestry.

### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH ROTARY AND OTHER SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

- Consider the kinds of projects undertaken by the organization and propose one that meets their needs as well as your own. In the case of Rotary, discuss it with the leadership and ask about also proposing it to the district governors since they typically select a districtwide project to work on during their yearlong term of office.
- While tree planting is an attractive project, also attempt gaining cooperation for post-planting care such as watering, stake removal, and pruning.
- Provide recognition, i.e., a sign or plaque. Definitely include media coverage of the event.

**ROTARY INTERNATIONAL.** Rotary's motto is "Service Above Self." This philosophy fits well with urban forestry, so it was little wonder that Mike found fertile ground when he planted the idea of Rotary contributing trees to the streets and parks of Lewiston. He did this by first offering to be a speaker at one of the organization's weekly meetings, and proposing how the club might help. At first, dogwoods were bought to help with the city's premier annual event, the Dogwood Festival. Mike convinced the leaders to branch out to provide other species as well, so each year 1 – 1 ½" caliper stock would be purchased by Rotary in cooperation with local nurseries and planted by its members.

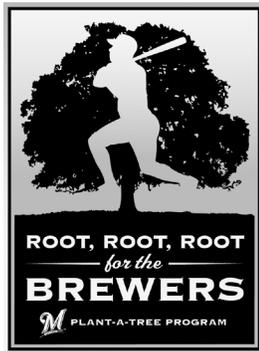
# Teaming Up with Professional & Local Sports

*The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides an excellent example of what is possible through collaboration with professional sport teams. The real lesson here, however, is that similar arrangements may be possible by working with minor league teams, colleges, Little League, and even high schools. Sports at any level are wildly popular. Winning friends there means winning friends for urban forestry in a big way.*

The leadership of sport teams of any size generally want to develop goodwill in their home communities. Many have a genuine interest in contributing to the local welfare and saying thank you to their fans. But whether a professional team or the local high school, the bottom

line is filling the stands on game day. With good ideas and careful planning, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) showed front office officials of two professional teams how teaming up with urban forestry could meet their needs in all those ways.

## ROOT, ROOT, ROOT FOR THE BREWERS



In this marvelous partnership, the DNR worked with the Milwaukee Brewers' director of business operations. In short, the team agreed to donate 150 large-caliper trees to be planted along Milwaukee's Hank Aaron State Trail (connecting the Brewers' Miller Park stadium to the lakefront). The number of trees was determined based on the amount of tickets sold (one

tree for every 20,000 tickets). In turn, the DNR agreed to provide 7,500 white spruce seedlings from the state nursery for free distribution at a home game during the Brewers' "Green Week" promotions. The latter included pre-game, on-field acknowledgement of nursery staff and tree planting messages (and the DNR logo) that were displayed throughout the game on the third largest video board in the major leagues.

As the program proved mutually satisfactory, the plantings were expanded to the U.S. Veterans Medical Center, the National Soldier's Home Historic District, and along streets and ballparks in nearby communities. The extended partnership also benefited the area's Urban Ecology Center by helping it plant a grove of sugar maples to eventually offer hands-on teaching about maple syrup production.

The idea began when the daughter of a coach suggested finding a way to offset the 450 tons of carbon emissions created from the team plane during travel for away games. At the same time, area municipalities were searching for funding sources to plant more trees. The Packers contacted Wisconsin Public Service, whose arborist convened a meeting with municipal foresters and the Wisconsin DNR urban forestry coordinator. A proposal from the DNR brought the ideas together and the result has been thousands of trees planted in the communities near Lambeau Field.



## FIRST DOWNS FOR TREES

In this unique partnership with the DNR, Wisconsin Public Service, U.S. Forest Service, and several others, the Green Bay Packers agreed to participate in the donation of trees based on the number of first downs made by the Packers the previous season.

## NONE OF THIS POSSIBLE WITHOUT PARTNERSHIPS

Neither of Wisconsin's exemplary projects would have been successful without the broader inclusion of partners. For example, in addition to the Brewers' generous contributions, the DNR Urban Forestry Program worked with the state's Reforestation Program to have the seedlings grown and packaged. Milwaukee County and benefiting communities did most of the tree planting and follow-up care. In the case of First Downs for Trees, a total of 29 partners were involved. Besides the Packers football organization, funds for trees were provided by Green Bay Packaging, the manufacturing company SCA, and U.S. Forest Service Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grants. Services were provided by an array of others and DNR's regional urban forestry coordinators lived up to their names by orchestrating the projects and providing technical advice.

Young girls from Elm Creative Elementary School in Milwaukee help to plant trees as part of a community celebration.



## TAKE AWAY TIPS

- ✓ **POINT OUT HOW TREE PLANTING BENEFITS THE COMMUNITY** when you contact team management, and how a partnership can benefit the team. Show the impact trees make by using dollar values and let your contact know that plenty of material is available that can be used by their marketing people. This all helps with the stories media professionals love to tell.
- ✓ **HAVE A PLAN READY TO PRESENT.** It should be brief and clear, spelling out who is responsible for what. Make it easy for them to say yes.
- ✓ **BE THRIFTY.** Make team contributions stretch as far as possible and show what others are contributing to the project.
- ✓ **YOU CAN NEVER SAY THANK YOU ENOUGH** or in too many ways. Take photos of volunteers with sport celebrities; nominate the team for awards; have school children send handmade thank you cards; pass a resolution of gratitude as part of your next Arbor Day ceremony.



Members of the Trailblazers professional basketball team were available for photos during a Friends of Trees planting event in Portland, Oregon.

- ✓ **CELEBRATE AND HAVE FUN** when the job is done. Throw a party; hold a media event; invite local officials, sponsors, players, etc. More photo opportunities.

*SOURCE: Adapted from material provided by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. To view a more detailed Team Strategy Playbook, see page 8 for contact information.*

# More Examples

## CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

There are some 3,000 conservation districts in the U.S. They have been around longer than the term urban forestry has existed and they are prime movers in making farms and woodlands more sustainable. As rural countryside increasingly becomes home to telecommuters and other non-farm families, there is clearly a need for the expansion of urban forestry beyond the city limits.

Conservation Districts usually have professional employees as well as local boards and members. They are well connected to the local population. And although the traditional focus of their work has been soil and water conservation practices, woodland management, and wildlife habitat, the interests in many districts coincide nicely with those of urban forestry. For example, Resource Conservation Coordinator Hannah Hursey with the Cabarrus (North Carolina) Soil and Water Conservation District, notes that her district is involved with identifying and conserving natural areas, educating youth about trees, helping to control invasive tree species, and encouraging tree planting.

As can be seen in the chart above from a national survey of conservation districts, the potential exists for much more to be done in partnerships with these organizations.

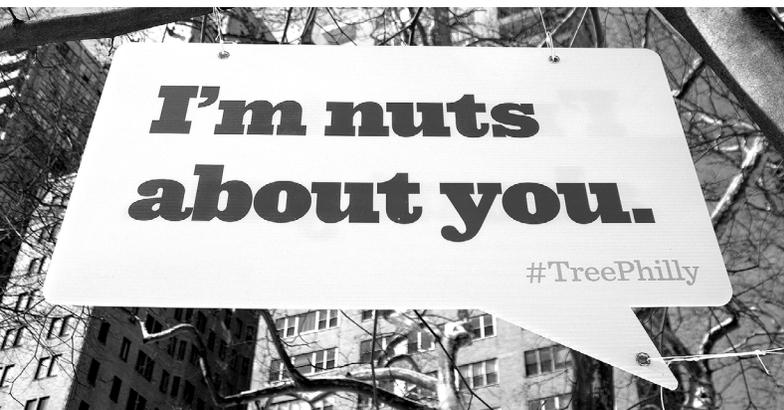
## 'ARBORLY LOVE' REACHES NEW TREE PLANTERS

TreePhilly, a program of the Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Department, found a powerful new way to advertise their annual yard tree giveaway to non-traditional audiences. Pre-registration is required for

### WHAT URBAN FORESTRY SERVICE(S) DOES YOUR CONSERVATION DISTRICT PROVIDE?



the trees and the goal is to increase tree canopy to 30 percent in all neighborhoods. Partnering with Masterminds, a new ad agency that was willing to help out on a pro bono basis, TreePhilly created simple, catchy signs and had them installed in downtown trees by certified arborists. The result was people paid attention! Moreover, they took pictures and used the #TreePhilly line on the signs to tweet their comments and photos. This led to significant buzz on social media and even won the Philadelphia Geek Award that was presented at an awards ceremony.



## TED TALKS TO HUGE AUDIENCES

TED, standing for Technology, Entertainment, and Design, is a nonprofit created to share and spread ideas through modern formats. In short, selected speakers from a wide range of disciplines have the limelight for 18 minutes or less. Paul Johnson, Texas A&M Forest Service, took advantage of the opportunity to present at a related TEDx Event on the topic of trees and tree benefits. The talk had to quickly get attention, be dynamically presented, and get its points across clearly. Paul used a box to build suspense about what can make communities healthier and smarter, and then brought out a seedling to explain how trees can make the world a better place — and what they need to grow. A large, new audience was reached.

## ENGAGING THE CRAFT BEER BREWERIES

Young trees need to be watered, but finding the budget or volunteers to do the job can be a challenge. Arborists in the Minneapolis area came up with a solution by reaching out to local craft breweries. This unusual alliance also involves the nonprofit organization People for Parks, the partner that can receive funds for the operation. In this program, called “Brewing a Better Forest,” volunteers receive a token when they sign up to adopt a tree for watering and they can exchange it for a free beer at a cooperating brewery. This, of course, usually means friends join them so, in turn, it means more business for the establishment. Because of the great advertising for the breweries, they are also asked for a donation to help fund the program.



A token for free beer from a cooperating brewery helps solve the tree-watering problem in Minneapolis.

Is it working? Here's what one resident said: “What a fantastic way to get the community involved in caring for our trees!” And a brewery operator: “Great idea! Supporting our city's trees along with supporting our local businesses and community! A win-win. Cheers!”



Paul Johnson of the Texas A&M Forest Service drew the connection between trees, wood products and other public benefits at a TEDx Event in Texas.

## BICYCLING FOR URBAN FORESTRY

Portland, Oregon, is ranked as one of the nation's most bike-friendly cities. The nonprofit organization, Friends of Trees, recognized the potential of recruiting the energetic bike riders to help with weekend plantings. In fact, many of their regular volunteers ride bikes and suggested that an alliance with the bicycle community would help reduce the use of motor vehicles and help make planting projects more carbon neutral. So, according to Jesse Batty, Neighborhood Trees Specialist, his organization reached out to various bike organizations and bike-centric blogs around the city to seek out those who might like to help plant trees on bicycle. The organizations included Portland's Bicycle Transportation Alliance and the Community Cycling Center as well as readers of the Bike Portland website. Many of the bicyclists have cargo bikes and bike trailers which make moving small trees and planting tools from site to site relatively easy.



# Reaching Out to Student Leaders

College students are the leaders of tomorrow. Unfortunately, most are not naturally inclined to be interested in urban forestry. In fact, the entire field is likely to be completely foreign to them. To address this problem, the Tree Campus USA® program was initiated in 2008 by the Arbor Day Foundation. If there is an institution of higher learning in your community, this may be an excellent way to win important friends for trees.

Five standards must be met in order to achieve Tree Campus USA distinction. All are designed not only to foster better tree care on campuses, but also to help educate students about urban forestry. The standards are:

1. A campus tree advisory committee that includes at least one student, faculty member, a representative of facility management, and the city forester or other member of the community who is associated with trees.
2. A campus tree care plan.
3. A campus tree program with dedicated funds.
4. An Arbor Day observance — always an excellent way to involve a large number of students and provide awareness for others.
5. A service learning project.

For more information about this unique opportunity to reach an important segment of the community and nation, please visit [arborday.org/treecampususa](http://arborday.org/treecampususa).



Tree Campus USA is a program designed to make students aware of the need for tree planting and care, and the opportunities and benefits of urban forestry.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION ...

Links to the organizations mentioned in this bulletin and other information can be found in the Supplemental Resources Library at [arborday.org/bulletins](http://arborday.org/bulletins). Click on Bulletin No. 78.

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