Acting Local, Thinking Global
Growing Future People and Trees!
Quality Pollinator Habitat Takes Years to Establish
Boots on the Ground and Roots in the Ground
If we all plant more oaks and other native plants, we can enhance rather than degrade our local ecosystems.

Dr. Doug Tallamy
University of Delaware
Acting Local, Thinking Global!

You may have noticed that this famous slogan is reversed here, with acting local first and thinking global second. Both are very important, but perhaps the most important question is what steps can we take on our own property, in our neighborhoods and on our farms? Never has this simple act of planting trees and caring for nature been more vital. As we suffer through storms and invasive pests, our trees and wildlife are taking a beating.

Planting a better tomorrow is at the heart of everything we do at Trees Forever! We are leading the way on what and how to plant trees and native plants that give us cleaner water and air; sequester carbon; support pollinators and other wildlife; and quite simply, restore our souls. With your help, our plantings along with extensive education and outreach make an immediate impact on the land and the people involved.

We have accomplished a lot together over the last 30 years:

- Supported an average of 8,000 hard-working volunteers each year!
- Launched the Growing Futures youth employment program in Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, planting more than 600 trees along streets and in public areas.
- Kicked off the Creating a Buzz program with field days and education for vocational agriculture instructors on establishing more pollinator habitat.
- Established and growing our endowment for tree planting, with all memorials, bequests and honorariums invested and held by the Trees Forever Foundation.
- Improved water quality with 9,638 acres of buffers and conservation plantings.

Please look to the pages of this edition of the Leaflet for inspiration on how we continue to meet our promise to you – the promise to plant a better tomorrow. Thanks for doing your part.

Sincerely,

Shannon Ramsay
Trees Forever Founding President & CEO

Lu Barron
Trees Forever Board Development Committee Co-Chair
Growing Future People and Trees!

Tree Forever’s Growing Futures Teammates (GFTs) have already planted more than 600 trees in two Iowa metros. The new youth employment program launched in the spring of 2019 in Des Moines and in the fall of 2019 in Cedar Rapids. Trees Forever is employing and mentoring teenagers and young adults as they plant, water and care for the Cities’ trees with a focus on underserved neighborhoods.

The City of Cedar Rapids is supporting Growing Futures with a major investment for the next five years. Trees Forever continues to seek additional funding through corporate sponsors and private donations. The Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation and Transamerica are top level sponsors.

The City of Des Moines also committed to major annual support for the next five years for new trees and watering, and Microsoft, via its Datacenter Community Development initiative has helped launch Growing Futures.

Trees Forever must raise a total of $5 million to meet the needs of the program and match City funds over the next five years.

“The work Trees Forever and the City does, in partnership with local youth, will plant trees along city streets and in our parks. This is a positive way to impact young people, grow our tree canopy, and extend the reach of our staff. We can accomplish far more together than separately.”

Scott Hock, Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Director
My students felt empowered by their ability to change their community. We had our annual ‘On the Lawn’ band and chorus concert not too long after the planting. I repeatedly saw students showing their parents the trees we planted. They were so proud of their accomplishment! I already have students asking when we are planting trees this year!

Karen McCabe
7th Grade Science Teacher
Pocomoke Middle School

Granting a Better Tomorrow

Trees Forever’s *Granting A Better Tomorrow* program uses endowment earnings to fund tree plantings in underfunded areas.

Pocomoke Middle School students *(shown above)* planted 30 trees on their school grounds in Maryland thanks to a *Granting a Better Tomorrow* grant, which helps fill a funding gap for areas in desperate need of trees. Pocomoke City has 31.8 percent of the population living below the poverty line, according to census data, and the middle school campus was predominately pavement. This planting not only helped a community forest lacking trees, it also got students outside and engaged with nature.

Planting for Pollinators

High school students in the Strasburg Lions “LEO” club noticed the lack of diversity in one of Strasburg, Illinois’ parks when they were doing a tree survey. The club applied for a *Granting a Better Tomorrow* grant to fix the problem. In the fall of 2018, they planted 12 trees, a mix of American linden, yellow buckeye, downy serviceberry and tulip poplar. What a great way to improve pollinator habitat and make the park more beautiful!
Quality Pollinator Habitat Takes Years to Establish

Our NEW Creating a Buzz program teaches landowners, crop specialists and educators how to create quality pollinator habitat. Quality pollinator habitat takes some know-how, labor and a lot of patience.

“If you plant it and forget about it, you’ll have a patch of weeds and invasive plants. We’ve set up the Creating a Buzz Field Day series to show what to expect every year of the process. A colorful and healthy pollinator habitat can be enjoyed in just a few years.”

Jeff Jensen
Tree Forever Program Manager

During a second year planting, you’ll see more purple coneflowers, Canada wild rye and fewer annual weeds.

During the third year, experts recommend burning a third of the site. By year three, you should see big bluestem, Indian grass, switch grass and variety of colorful species that bloom all year. Our field days dive deeper into topics such as establishment, timing of burning and mowing, seed mixes, maintenance, cost-share funding and plant identification.

The program also directly targets crop specialists and educators through presentations, webinars and Pollinator Plus toolkits.

Creating a Buzz is possible thanks to these partners: Syngenta, Operation Pollinator, GROWMARK FS, and NRCS.

Each Creating a Buzz Field Day showcases pollinator sites in different stages of growth, which need different approaches of care. During the first year of a pollinator planting, a landowner will see more black-eyed Susan, partridge pea, yarrow and annual weeds. Experts recommend mowing at eight inches and hand picking invasive plants. Grasses are established over time, and forbes come earlier.
Quality Pollinator Habitat Takes Years to Establish

Make Our Forests Healthier by Removing Invasive Species

The threat of invasive species is startling because native plants provide more benefits for the environment than non-native plants – including better food and habitat for animals and pollinators. We are working with partners through multiple programs to educate the public on this threat and to create an army of advocates who are equipped to identify and remove invasive species.

First Year Site
(left) Gary McCormick, Trees Forever’s Working Watershed: Buffer & Beyond 2019 participant, frost seeded his site in March. McCormick’s property has a landing strip for his plane. The land adjacent to this landing strip was an odd shape, so he squared it off by planting pollinator habitat. What a great excuse to help pollinators!

Second Year Site
(above) Matt Francois planted his pollinator habitat in 2018, so it was a good example for field day attendees to compare to McCormick’s. Both are in Jones County, Iowa.

Established Site
(left) Jones County Secondary Roads planted this site years ago along X40 in rural Jones County. The roadside manager provided great insight to landowners on the challenges this site faced. The diversity of plants and the pollinators flying around showed field day attendees what their hard work can turn into.

What Has Wandered Into the Woods?
Program attendees at Backbone State Park look at how a young Oriental bittersweet is much different than the woody vine of a more established plant. Species identification is an important lesson within this field day, and the workshop series focused on how the health of our forests can be improved by removing invasives.

Backyard Forest Field Day
Landowners joined experts from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Trees Forever and Linn County Conservation for the Backyard Forest Field Day at Squaw Creek Park in Marion. Discussion centered around invasive species identification and management. A similar field day was also held in western Iowa during October.
BEE-auitful Habitat

Celebrating a 10-Year Partnership

Bruce and Jenny Wessling hosted a field day in western Iowa to mark the Green Farmstead Partner program’s 10th year. The Wessling’s windbreak around their hog confinement building was the first planting with the program.

The Green Farmstead Partner program is a collaborative effort involving the Coalition to Support Iowa’s Farmers (CSIF), Trees Forever and the Iowa Nursery and Landscape Association. “To date, more than 70,000 trees have been planted on Iowa livestock farms through the Green Farmstead Partner program, and that number is growing every year,” said Brian Waddingham, executive director of CSIF.

The Wesslings showcased both their ten-year-old planting and a newly planted windbreak, both around hog confinement buildings. This field day demonstrated the value and practically of trees on a farm.

“Our established windbreak has saved us time and gas money in the winter since the trees keep the snow away from the ventilation fans,” Bruce Wessling said. “We’ve noticed a decrease in our power bills for electricity and propane since we added the trees and shrubs.”

“We want to protect water and air quality and live in a healthy environment,” said Jenny Wessling. “Our daughter Jolee and her fiance, Austin, are planning on staying on the farm, and we want this to continue to be a good place to live.”

Working the Watershed for Future Food

When Indian Creek Nature Center started to convert an old farm in Marion, Iowa, into a demonstration center for restorative agriculture practices, Trees Forever wanted to pitch in to help! Fruit and nut trees are essential perennial crops in a sustainable future, and our staff can provide some knowledge, advice and financial assistance.

A Trees Forever Working Watersheds: Buffers & Beyond grant funded 202 fruit and nut trees, and the next generation of young people planted the trees. Trees Forever’s Growing Futures team in Cedar Rapids used this planting as part of their orientation, and Dawson Fluharty, an Eagle Scout with Troop 40 out of Mount Vernon, organized the planting as part of their orientation, and Dawson Fluharty, an Eagle Scout with Troop 40 out of Mount Vernon, organized the logistics of trees for the day and recruited additional volunteers.
It’s Part of the Plan

In northern Peoria County, along the Illinois River Road, Coal Hollow Park is a gem of a find. Volunteer Steward, Michael Contratto, thought so too, when he found the park while looking for a place to walk his new puppy.

The property, obtained by the Chillicothe Park District in 2007, contained forests, streams, prairies and agricultural fields, but was overrun with invasive species. Contratto could envision the possibilities of what the park could look like, but he also saw many challenges.

In 2014, Contratto participated in the University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Program and began working on a plan to restore Coal Hollow to its natural beauty. He presented his five-year plan to the Chillicothe Park District Board of Directors in 2015 and with their support began networking to identify resources which could help implement the plan. Through the Trees Forever Pollinator Habitat Conservation program, Contratto and many volunteers have planted more than 12 acres of pollinator habitat. In 2019, as part of the Illinois Buffer Partnership program, they planted 12 acres of riparian buffer along Coon Creek.

Contratto attributes the success of this project to support from the Chillicothe Park District. He also believes having a long-term plan with short-term goals allowed him to be ready to utilize opportunities as they arose.

Contratto was honored with a Trees Forever Outstanding Volunteer Award in 2019.
Trees Reduce Energy!

The right tree in the right place improves energy efficiency. Trees block cold winter winds, and shade buildings from the hot summer sun. That’s why so many utilities partner with us for their energy efficiency tree-planting programs.

Students in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, planted trees during Trees Forever’s Earth Week Blitz. This planting was funded through Trees Forever and Alliant Energy’s Branching Out partnership.

City staff, Waverly Trees Forever volunteers and friends planted trees on the east side of Waverly-Shell Rock School (Iowa). This planting was funded through Trees Forever and Waverly Utilities partnership.

Hometown Pride and Pocahontas Area Community High School Interact Club planted new trees, thanks to a Black Hills Energy and Trees Forever’s Power of Trees grant. The trees were planted throughout the community, including at the elementary playground and near the high school parking lot.

Give Voice and Value to Our Natural Assets

Our Woodland Legacy Symposium

Join us for a day full of insightful presentations and conversations that inspire and inform! Connect the dots in compelling and inclusive ways that bring everyone on board with practices to conserve and create more nature in our neighborhoods, at schools and at home.

Thursday, December 12, 2019
8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Cedar Rapids Country Club
550 27th St Dr SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Bringing Open Spaces to our Urban Lives

Keynote speaker George Hess, Ph.D., North Carolina State Department of Forestry and Environmental Resources, will summarize his research on how natural areas and green spaces in cities support healthy cultures, people and environments.

Details and online registration at: www.TreesForever.org/Symposium
In order to restore a community forest to its best health, we need to make sure we are planting diverse species of trees. Diversity protects the trees from a pest or disease that would wipe out a monoculture. Through Trees Forever’s *Recover, Replant, Restore!* program, we help communities recovering from natural and man-made disasters, such as emerald ash borer. One of the big steps we take before replanting is to do an inventory of healthy, sick and damaged trees.

This photo in Taylorville, Illinois, shows volunteers counting the rings of a 51-inch diameter tree which had to be cut down after a 2018 tornado. Unfortunately, many large mature trees were lost because of the storm, along with the thousands of dollars of benefits those trees provided. The good news is, Trees Forever and the Taylorville Tree Recovery Team raised enough money to plant 100 trees this fall to replace those lost in the tornado.

The Intersection of Native Plants and Progress

For more than two decades, Iowa’s Living Roadways has helped Iowa communities create positive changes and improvements along roads, community trails and transportation corridors. Trees Forever, Iowa State University, Iowa DOT and partners work with local volunteers to showcase small towns – whether that’s by envisioning a new amphitheater surrounded by beautiful trees, a community trail winding through a native prairie, or signs featuring a town’s unique history.

As a **Community Visioning** town in 2017, the Iowa’s Living Roadways partners were able to assist Adel throughout the entire process, from brainstorming, facilitating conversations, designing, and connecting the committee with potential funders. Adel’s committee raised more than $85,000! With this money, they installed lighting on the old railroad bridge that crosses the Raccoon River and that is part of the Raccoon River Valley Trail system, and they landscaped a core section of the trail with native trees, shrubs, and prairie plants. Trees Forever’s **Granting a Better Tomorrow** funded a handful of trees, shrubs and native plants.

**Back by Popular Demand!**

Stewards of the Beautiful Land is an educational course that provides hands-on learning opportunities for community members, leaders and professionals in the prairies and woodlands of Iowa. Participants will learn about Iowa’s native ecosystems, practice plant identification skills, meet local partners and develop skills that enable them to share their support of Iowa’s native ecosystems with elected officials. Look for more information to come when the courses launch in 2020!

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Wes Gibbs, Jones County Secondary Roads’ Roadside Manager, and Shannon Ramsay, Trees Forever CEO pose during a field day. Gibbs was an excellent resource for many landowners learning about pollinator habitat, and Stewards of the Beautiful Land will be a great opportunity for us to partner with more roadside managers.

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**Congratulations to our newest participants in Iowa’s Living Roadways Community Visioning.**

**2019 Participants**
- Audubon
- Bedford
- Coggon
- Durant
- Hinton
- Royal
- Sumner
- Treynor
- Van Meter
- Walcott

**2020 Participants**
- Avoca
- Elkader
- Fairfax
- Lost Nation
- Madrid
- Mingo
- Mount Pleasant
- Polk City
- Reinbeck
- Wellsburg

**Iowa’s Living Roadways Accomplishments Since 1996**

**Community Visioning**
- 265 communities
- 18,590 volunteers
- 94,874 volunteer hours

**Projects**
- 271 Iowa communities supported
- 523 planting projects awarded funds
- 92 of 99 Iowa counties reached
- 45,184 trees and shrubs
- 155,345 perennials
- 44,825 lbs. of grass and forb seed
- 14,139 volunteer

**Trails Visioning**
- 21 trails
- 1,053 volunteers
- 13,853 volunteer hours
Preserving Historical Trees

While planting new trees is very important, we also emphasize that protecting large, mature trees is vital to a healthy ecosystem. A larger tree provides more habitat, more oxygen and absorbs more toxins.

As Guy Sternberg advised during our Annual Celebration, we can’t protect every large tree, so we need to rally the community around important historic trees and champion trees. Rallying the community before these trees are in danger means that there’s a group of people ready to fight for the tree if or when someone wants to take it down.

The Wayside Haw is a great example of how a community can come together to support a mature tree. The 85-year-old hawthorn (*pictured above*) was planted in 1934 during the first highway beautification project in Illinois. The tree is just inches shy of being the Illinois state champion *Crataegus mollis*. A local environmental group, Menard County Trails and Greenways (MCTG), has created Wayside Park around the tree on a few acres of IDOT land. During the fall of 2019, volunteers braced the trees limbs, and Trees Forever helped the group with an interpretative sign illustrating the historical significance of the Wayside Haw.

Tree Research on Climate Change

Dr. Jud Isebrands, an Iowa native who received his PhD from Iowa State University, has spent his entire career doing research on trees and forests for the U.S. Forest Service. He was the principal investigator on a one-of-a-kind research project studying carbon dioxide and how it made trees more susceptible to insects and diseases. Since then, researchers have found more evidence of climate change and its impact.

“All of the evidence is there that we have a volatile climate. It all points to a call for action. Tree planting is essential for us to adapt!” Isebrands said.

Trees soak up CO₂. We recommend planting drought and pest resistant trees, as well as a diverse mix of species.

Jud Isebrands was awarded a 2019 Trees Forever Environmental Steward Award because of his advocacy work internationally and efforts on his own property in Iowa. He has taken land out of row crop production in favor of conservation and providing wildlife habitat.
Welcome!

New Staff

Gail Barels
Program and Board Administrative Coordinator
Gail has a B.A. in Biology and German from Buena Vista University and a B.S. in Applied Ecology from Eastern Kentucky University and has worked for over three decades as a naturalist. Now retired from that field, Gail is supporting the Visioning Program, the Board and CEO at Trees Forever. Gail enjoys camping, traveling, kayaking and spending time with her dogs.

Kerri Sorrell
Des Moines Program Coordinator, Central Iowa
Kerri developed her affection for the outdoors growing up in Iowa City, wandering the trails of her elementary school’s ravine, helping her parents in the vegetable garden and spending many a night inside a tent at Lake Macbride State Park. She carried this affection through journalism and graphic design degrees at Drake University, later entering the nonprofit conservation field, and eventually on to Trees Forever, where she now manages the Growing Futures and TreeKeepers programs in Iowa’s largest metro. When not organizing logistics or working to increase access to nature for all Iowans, you can usually find Kerri fixing bikes at the Des Moines Bicycle Collective or listening to a podcast on her porch swing.

Returning Board Member

Tom Hadden
West Des Moines City Manager
Tom Hadden has served as the West Des Moines City Manager since 2014, and from 1996 until 2014, Tom was the Executive Director of Metro Waste Authority. Under his leadership, Metro Waste provided environmentally sound and cost-effective services for 16 cities and Polk County. Tom has advanced solid waste management by developing and implementing the Environmental Management Systems across the state, including central Iowa. He has also served in leadership roles on numerous boards and committees during his career including: Southeast Polk School Board, Watershed Planning Advisory Committee, Governor’s Water Quality Task Force, Wastewater Reclamation Authority, Iowa Environmental Council and the Altoona Area Campus. Tom received a Master of Science degree in Environmental Engineering, a BS in Biology, both from Iowa State University, and an MBA from the University of Iowa. He is married to Tina Mowry Hadden and has two sons, Jeffrey and Caleb.

(upper left) Long-time donor J.C. “Buz” Brenton shakes hands with Dave Blankenship, Board Chair.
(left) Trees Forever Board Members and Foundation Trustees pose during a reception at the Stine Barn. Left to right: Brad Morgan, Past Board Chair; Janis McFarland, Foundation Trustee; Tracy Peterson, Past Board Chair; Shannon Ramsay, Founding President; and Lu Barron, Development Committee Co-Chair.
Endowment Gifts
June-September 2019
in honor of / by
Allie and Eric
Jeffrey & Melanie Koolbeck
Bill Baltisberger
Nancy & Randy Lowenberg
Doug Kopp
Shannon Ramsay
Don Olson
Nancy & Randy Lowenberg
Tracy Peterson
Shannon Ramsay
Laura Russell
Shannon Ramsay
Neely Shah
Martha Rogers
Dusky Terry
Nancy & Dave Duncan
in memory of / by
Bob and Verna Bair
Pat & Gordy Graves
Mary & Phil Pigott
Bill Birmingham
Deb Roman
Libby Slappey & Charles Crawley
Ann Blaylock
Shannon Ramsay
Robert Brenton
Trees Forever
Jeanne Bridenstine
Richard & Janice Beals
John & Denise Bridenstine
Renee Bridenstine
David Stolper & Linda Curtis Stolper
J. D. & Edith Daniels
Mara Deaton
Norman & Laura Deaton
First Presbyterian Church
John & Margery Graves
Rosemary Hartschen
Janice Lewis
Margery McCordell
Dennis & Nancy Parrott
Gregory Weber & Rhea Simpson-Weber
Therese Volk
Judy Wittenberg
Kathleen Daly
Trees Forever
Danne Hamilton
Pat and Gordy Graves
David Junge
Kim Harris
Beau Randall Keel
Margaret Birmingham
Richard Lowenberg
Nancy & Randy Lowenberg
Patricia Lynk
Peter & Ida Sorensen
Trees Forever
Barbara Lynk
Rogene Westerberg
Dr. Lawrence Marshall
Lorna & Tom Safley
Keinna Masta
Shannon Ramsay
Thomas Mohr
Paula Mohr
Christine Newcomb
Shannon Ramsay
Dan Rogers
Shannon Ramsay
Trees Forever
Maria Elena Serrano
Shannon Ramsay
Robert Stevenson
Marcio Tokita
Gerry Wahlberg
Nancy & Randy Lowenberg
Mark Williams
Margaret Birmingham

Boots on the Ground and Roots in the Ground

It’s been an exciting year!

We’ve had our first Growing Futures teams in Des Moines and Cedar Rapids; our headquarters moved into a new building; and our new Creating a Buzz program has educated and engaged crop specialists, educators and landowners!

We’ve been reaching new audiences and spreading important knowledge on how to care for our trees, forests and natural areas.

We pride ourselves as having “boots on the ground” planting trees and getting “roots in the ground” to stop erosion and improve habitat for wildlife and humans.

Help us continue our important work by giving at www.TreesForever.org/donate.

Reaching beyond the choir is not easy, and it’s only possible because of generous donors like you.

Thank you for helping us plant a better tomorrow.

The North Cedar Neighborhood Association planted 50 trees during September 2019 with 72 fifth- and sixth-graders from North Cedar Elementary School (Iowa) and about 37 additional volunteers. Jim Newcomb, Trees Forever member and former board member (at left in orange shirt) led the efforts along with long-time Trees Forever member Sue Green (above in orange shirt). (photos: Sasha Wohlpart)
TreeKeepers plant trees next to the new Trees Forever headquarters in Marion, Iowa.

Trees Forever TreeKeepers courses have always been hands-on, but classes are now held at our own facility where demonstration areas are being established for showcasing buffer plantings, pollinator habitat and more.