

# SHADE

CONNECT...AND COLLABORATE

**URBAN and  
COMMUNITY  
FORESTRY**  
Building Strong Alliances

TALES OF  
**COLLABORATION**  
From 3 Green Cities

**HOW TO TALK**  
to Legislators

**RECRUITING &  
KEEPING**  
Your Volunteer Team

**GUFC CONFERENCE**  
Showcases  
the Legacy  
Message





# SHADE

CONNECT...AND COLLABORATE



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## Georgia Urban Forest Council (GUFUC)

### MISSION

To sustain Georgia's green legacy by helping communities grow healthy trees.

### VISION

To be a broad-based leadership resource in promoting the importance of trees throughout Georgia by leveraging user-friendly technology, influencing the policy-making process and providing cutting-edge programming.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

USDA Forest Service  
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# WELCOME TO SHADE

A publication that promotes ALLIANCES AMONG URBAN TREE ORGANIZATIONS



Dear Friends in Urban Forestry:

To the average person, a tree seems so simple. In fact, it's really almost too simple. Most people don't think about a tree until it is cut down or dies. But trees touch so many aspects of our lives and have the ability to help mitigate many of the problems facing our communities today. Trees help control stormwater, reduce energy costs, improve property values, increase retail sales and help children perform better in schools. This is why The Home Depot Foundation is committed to promoting the role of urban forestry in creating healthier, more sustainable communities.

The Home Depot Foundation was pleased to be the Presenting Sponsor for GUFUC's 17th Annual Conference, "Connect and Collaborate! Working Together for a Healthy Urban Forest." Collaboration is at the heart of what we do and, we believe, it is key to the success of urban forestry. The conference presented an exciting opportunity to learn how to build alliances to improve the quality of our urban forests and the health of our cities. This issue of SHADE shares much of the information presented at the conference. As you review these pages, I hope you will be inspired with new ideas and thoughts on opportunities to form partnerships that can help you fulfill your missions of strengthening Georgia's urban forests.

Sincerely,

Kelly Caffarelli  
President  
The Home Depot Foundation



Sincerely,  
  
Jim Wetherington, Mayor  
City of Columbus, Georgia



# TREES MATTER in Georgia

COLUMBUS CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT  
Georgia's First Consolidated Government  
Post Office Box 1340  
Columbus, Georgia 31902-1340

From: Jim Wetherington, Mayor  
To: Friends of the Georgia Urban Forest Council

The City of Columbus has long recognized the value of our urban tree canopy. We continue to work together with community partners to find ways to grow and maintain our urban forest. In this time of historic drought, we're working with Keep Columbus Beautiful and Trees Columbus on creative tree planting and maintenance programs with an emphasis on water conservation. Community collaboration is the foundation of a successful urban forestry program, and that is particularly true here in Columbus.

On Arbor Day 2008, we will celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our designation as Georgia's very first Tree City USA. We invite communities across Georgia to join in a statewide celebration of trees and the many benefits they provide.

Here in Columbus and throughout Georgia, urban trees play a critical role in maintaining a thriving community. The Georgia Urban Forest Council is helping us all work together for a healthy urban forest.



Collaborating for smart tree management and planning for future generations — those were among the hot topics at the 17th Annual GUFC Conference & Awards Luncheon, held Oct. 31 to Nov. 2 in Rome, GA.

Presenters from Georgia and around the nation shared guidelines for building community partnerships. Georgia's water crisis also drew attention, while a thought-provoking program on the "Legacy" message offered out-of-the-box thinking (see facing page).

Some of those ideas are highlighted on these pages.

# NOTEWORTHY Tree Talk



"I've learned that if you are going to get into greening, you can't go it alone."

*Joe Wilson, Executive Director, Greening Milwaukee*

"You've got to educate citizens, businesses and government officials about the benefit of urban forestry...you need to form partnerships and work closely with anyone you can."

*Jim Dixon, former Assistant City Manager, Rome, GA*

"One of the first things I was taught in lobbying was that you gain credibility in drops, but you lose it in buckets."

*Jill Johnson, Interim Director, Georgia Conservation Voters*

"Volunteers are the difference between success and failure for many organizations."

*Marcia Bansley, Executive Director, Trees Atlanta*

"Every member in [an] alliance needs to share what he is willing to give to this effort and what he wants to get out of it."

*Elaine Chaney, Consultant, Institute for Conservation Leadership*

**\$8,000**  
Annual allocation  
for the purchase of  
seedlings in Rome, GA,  
since 1986.

## Georgians Look to the Future

The Georgia Urban Forest Council and the Georgia Forestry Commission commissioned a study by (r)evolution partners to survey Georgians' attitudes toward urban trees. The group presented its findings at the recent GUFC Conference in Rome.

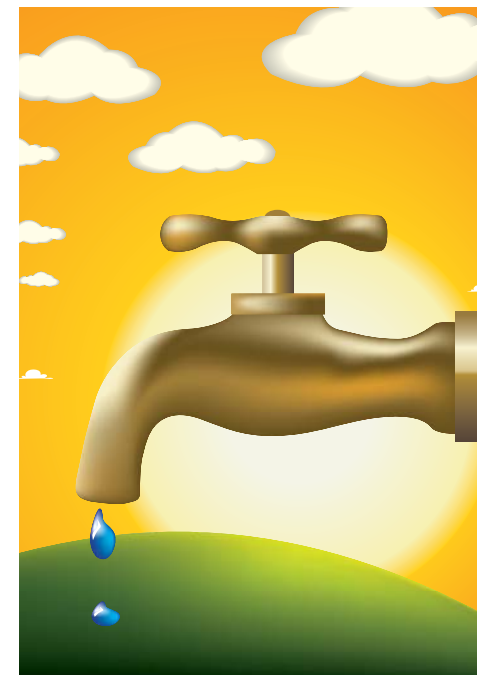
(r)evolution partners tested several messages to find the ones that were the most memorable and motivational. "Create Your Legacy" ranked as the strongest message. 64% of respondents gave it a high score for **MOTIVATION** and 88% scored it high for **MEMORABLE**.

The second and third highest scoring concepts were "Connection with the Environment" and "You Can Make a Difference."

Read more about the "Legacy" message on page 17.

## Wasted Water

Georgia's drought brought into harsh focus the inefficiencies in our water use. An average person in the United States uses **125–150 gallons** of water per day for cooking, washing, flushing and watering. This is more than **40% over** what is needed to accomplish these tasks.



"'Create Your Legacy' is so powerful because it says that right now you have the chance to do something powerful for your grandchildren. But you have to take action for future generations to receive that benefit."

— (r)evolution partners

## Caring for Georgia's Stressed Trees

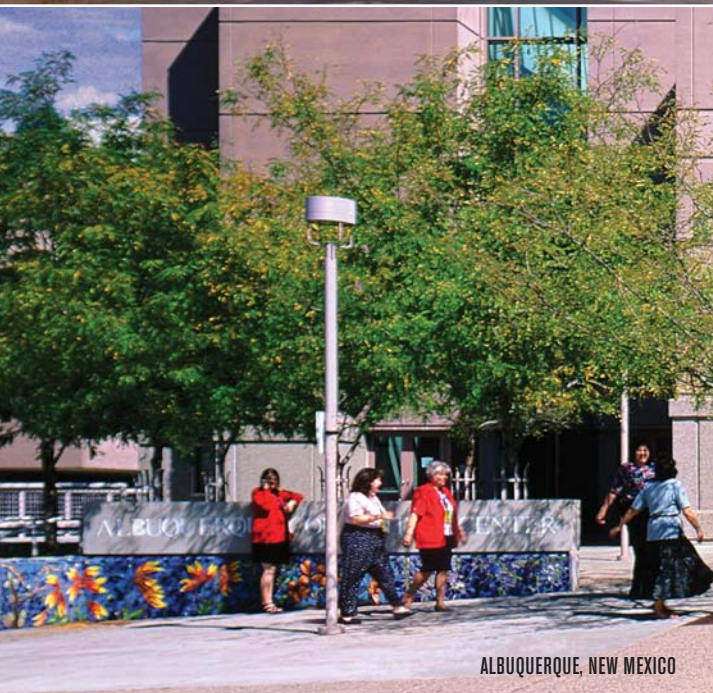
Water, or the lack of it, was on everyone's minds at the recent GUFC Conference. A segment of the program was dedicated to tree care in response to the environmental challenges of 2007. Dan Whitehead, a horticulturist with Moon's Tree Farm, Inc., in Loganville, GA, offered these suggestions to assist our stressed urban trees:

1. Aerate compacted soils on the outer edges of tree root systems to allow rainfall to permeate into the root resource region versus becoming runoff.
2. Mulch root zones with porous materials such as pine straw. This allows available moisture to penetrate the soil while retaining moisture at the soil line for use by surface roots.
3. Take soil tests to determine specific nutrient need. Generic supplements of lime, gypsum and fertilizer are often applied without a complete understanding of the specific needs. A soil test can evaluate specific site needs.
4. Avoid time-released fertilizers for trees in the landscape and do not fertilize in the fall and early winter with nitrogen-based fertilizers. Nitrogen spurs on sap activity in a tree when it is attempting to become or is already dormant. Once you receive your analysis from the soil test, plan on the first fertilization near mid-March. A second fertilization can be applied during mid-summer.





ROME, GEORGIA



ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO



MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN



PARTNERSHIPS...  
TEAMWORK...  
CONNECTION

# A Tale of THREE GREEN CITIES

**C**hildren aren't the only ones. It also takes a village to raise a tree — a village that includes developers, businesses, local and state governments and conservationists. Without all these disparate groups working together, the chances are slim that your area's urban forest will withstand ever-growing developmental pressures. Add in more current complications of Mother Nature, and those chances shrink even more. "We are faced with the most extreme and unusual natural phenomenon that we've seen in decades — a drought, outdoor watering ban and tri-state water wars," says Robert Farris, interim director of the Georgia Forestry Commission. "This extreme situation requires collaboration among all different interests."

Some cities have gotten this message long ago, loud and clear, and, as a result, are models of successful collaboration. Here is a look at three such cities — and their tales of successful urban forest management.

### Forward thinking in Albuquerque

Collaboration is built right in to Nick Kuhn's job description. His position as city forester of Albuquerque, NM,

created in 2006 by Mayor Martin Chavez, is unique in many ways. For starters, Kuhn is perhaps the only city forester in the country to be part of the city's environmental health department rather than the parks and recreation department. What's more, his mission is not the usual dictate to maintain canopy. Instead, he is charged with pollution prevention and remediation.

"The mayor wants Albuquerque to be the leader in climate change initiatives and sustainability programs," says Kuhn. "My office, along with others in the environmental health department, is charged with making that happen. That mandate frees me from having to oversee the day-to-day program operations of an urban forest. Instead, I'm able to focus my time on policy and outreach."

Being in the environmental health department gives Kuhn resources and leverage that any other city forester would envy. He works shoulder to shoulder with environmental scientists instead of street planners. As a result, his department is not looking at trees as landscaping. "We are looking at them as solar-powered, energy-saving, water-filtering, air pollution-remediation tools," says Kuhn. "For a long time, people dealing with climate change and sustainability have been focused on new technology and energy-saving devices. But if you add in common sense — using nature to help

cool surfaces with shade in the summer and warm them with a wind break in the winter, for example — then you get the biggest bang for your buck."

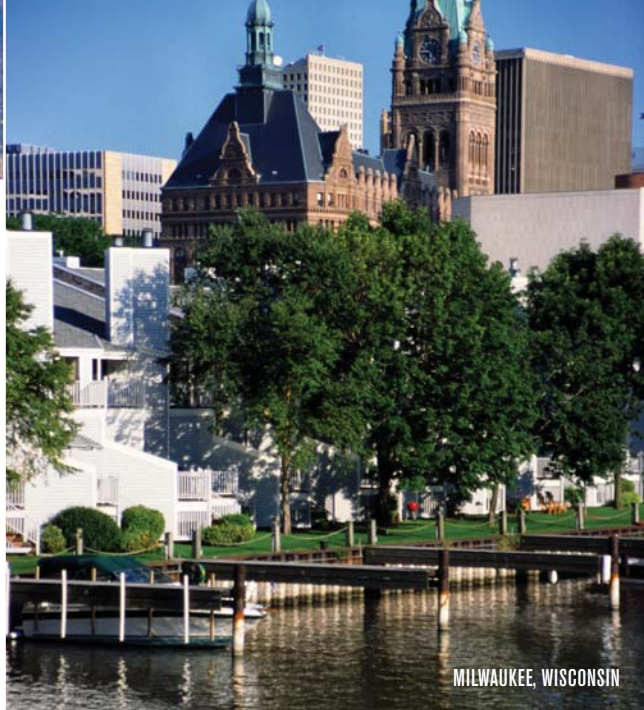
To carry out such a far-reaching mandate, collaboration is a must. "The ordinance specifically dictates that I am to review all city policies in all city departments to suggest improvements," says Kuhn. "It spells out that I am to develop relationships with green industries to benefit the city."

Accordingly, Kuhn works closely with the city planning department and the municipal development department. He not only makes sure they are trained in proper tree placement, planting and maintenance, but that they build tree protection and development into their day-to-day policies.

Kuhn is just as involved in the private sector. For example, he has worked with local nurseries to encourage them to grow and sell desirable trees — that is, trees that need little water, provide shade and don't have allergen issues. "The nurseries are ecstatic," says Kuhn. "They now know the rules and what the city wants. Not only are we making our city healthier and safer, we're improving our businesses as well."

Kuhn is doing the same thing with concrete makers to encourage the production of affordable pervious concrete and with landscapers to promote xeriscaping. "I'm not only letting them know what the city is doing,





MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

MILWAUKEE PHOTOS COURTESY OF MILWAUKEE DEPARTMENT OF CITY DEVELOPMENT

but I'm asking for their input and suggestions. Normally it would take years to develop these kinds of partnerships," continues Kuhn. "But by making city-wide collaboration a priority of my job, I've been able to help make Albuquerque a leader in our green and sustainability efforts."

### Regrowth in Milwaukee

Joe Wilson's position as executive director of Greening Milwaukee was born out of collaboration between city officials and concerned citizens. Though the office was created in 1996, the seeds for it were sown in the 1960s, when the Dutch Elm epidemic claimed over 200,000 city trees. Three decades after the disaster, the

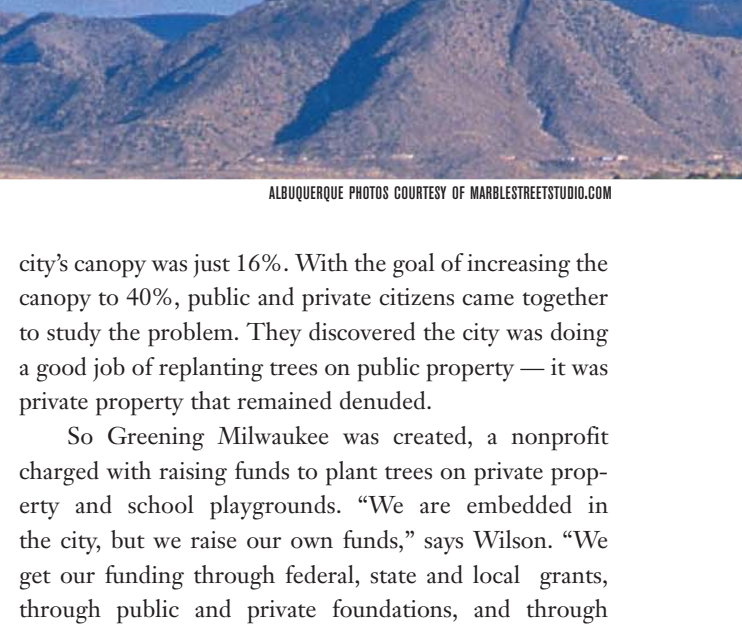
city's canopy was just 16%. With the goal of increasing the canopy to 40%, public and private citizens came together to study the problem. They discovered the city was doing a good job of replanting trees on public property — it was private property that remained denuded.

So Greening Milwaukee was created, a nonprofit charged with raising funds to plant trees on private property and school playgrounds. "We are embedded in the city, but we raise our own funds," says Wilson. "We get our funding through federal, state and local grants, through public and private foundations, and through donations from businesses and private citizens."

For homeowners, Greening Milwaukee offers an extremely generous program. It buys trees from a city-run nursery and makes them available for free. "And these aren't seedlings," says Wilson. "We're talking about 1 1/2-inch to 2-inch caliper trees. We want the trees to be significant."

While the homeowners are responsible for planting the trees, Wilson's office provides a complete education program, via a DVD and a Web site, that shows how to select, plant and care for a tree. In addition, Wilson collaborates with the mayor's office to sponsor the Mayor's Landscape Awards each year to encourage tree planting and other greening activities.

Another focus of Greening Milwaukee is working closely with the city's forestry division and the Milwaukee Public Schools to improve school playgrounds. At Congress Avenue Elementary, for example, Wilson's work



ALBUQUERQUE PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARBLESTREETSTUDIO.COM

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

transformed a playground that was a "sea of asphalt" by putting in an island of landscaping and trees. Not only did the trees make the playground look much nicer, they were placed so that water would run off into the planting area rather than into the sewer system.

Greening Milwaukee has planted in excess of 12,000 trees since its inception. "Along the way, I've learned that if you are going to get into greening, you can't go it alone," says Wilson. "You truly need to make everything a collaborative effort. You need to work with governments, with businesses and private citizens if you really want to accomplish anything. In Milwaukee, we've worked hard to establish those relationships, so now all roads lead to trees."

### Steady progress in Rome

Establishing and building the urban forest in Rome, GA, has involved a series of partnerships and collaborative efforts spanning three decades. "The city and the county started acquiring riverfront property back in the late '70s," says Jim Dixon, who was assistant city manager from 1982 to 2006 and a driving force behind Rome's urban forest. "Now we own most of the urban riverfront — about 500 acres — which allows us to protect the flood plain and establish a large section of urban forest."

In the mid-'80s, Dixon turned his attention from the riverfront to the downtown, specifically Broad Street. This main thoroughfare was the second-widest street in Georgia — "a sea of asphalt and concrete," says Dixon.

Dixon worked with the Downtown Development Authority to develop a streetscape plan. He and others convinced private businesses to donate several thousand dollars toward the \$1.4 million project, and he coaxed more funds out of Georgia Power and the Georgia Department of Transportation. The result is traffic islands and sidewalks planted with water oaks, crepe myrtle and Japanese Zelkova framing a vibrant district of shops, restaurants and businesses. "It has been a very successful



ROME, GEORGIA

project for us," says Dixon. "It helped us revive our downtown commercial district and really got us started in tree planting and beautification."

In the early '90s, Dixon approached the city commission about developing a 90-acre tract on the Oostanaula River into a park. The commission gave its nod — as long as it didn't have to put any money into it. So Dixon arranged a selective cutting of trees on the land and sold the timber to raise \$41,000. "We used that money and a lot of volunteer labor to develop Ridge Ferry Park," says Dixon. "We got a small grant from the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Service to redevelop a wetland on the property. Today the park is used a tremendous amount. About 20,000 people were here recently for a craft festival."

Rome's success with its urban forest comes down to a steady building of public and private support. "When you are trying to create something like this, you have to get the public behind you, so you will have the political will to adopt an ordinance and get funding," says Dixon. "That means you've got to educate citizens, businesses and government officials about the benefit of urban forestry, and that must be done through more than one organization. You need to form partnerships and work closely with anyone you can." 🌿

## Building a Collaborative Alliance

HOW DO YOU BRING PEOPLE WITH different backgrounds and viewpoints together to work toward a common goal? Perhaps the easiest way to start is to look at what not to do.

A recent study in the *Harvard Business Review* looked at what causes corporate alliances to fall apart. It found that a breakdown in trust and communication and an inability to resolve disagreements were the most common causes of failure. "It really comes down to building trust and open communication," says Elaine Chaney, a consultant with the Institute for Conservation Leadership, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit.

How do you build that trust? First of all, you've got to slow down. "We are all so goal-oriented, we have the tendency to just want to pull everyone in the room, set our goals and jump into an action plan," says Chaney. "You'd be much better served taking the time up front to answer some key questions. Specifically, every member in the alliance needs to share what he is willing to give to this effort and what he wants to get out of it. Remember, even though you are talking about a collaboration between organizations, it's still a coalition among people."

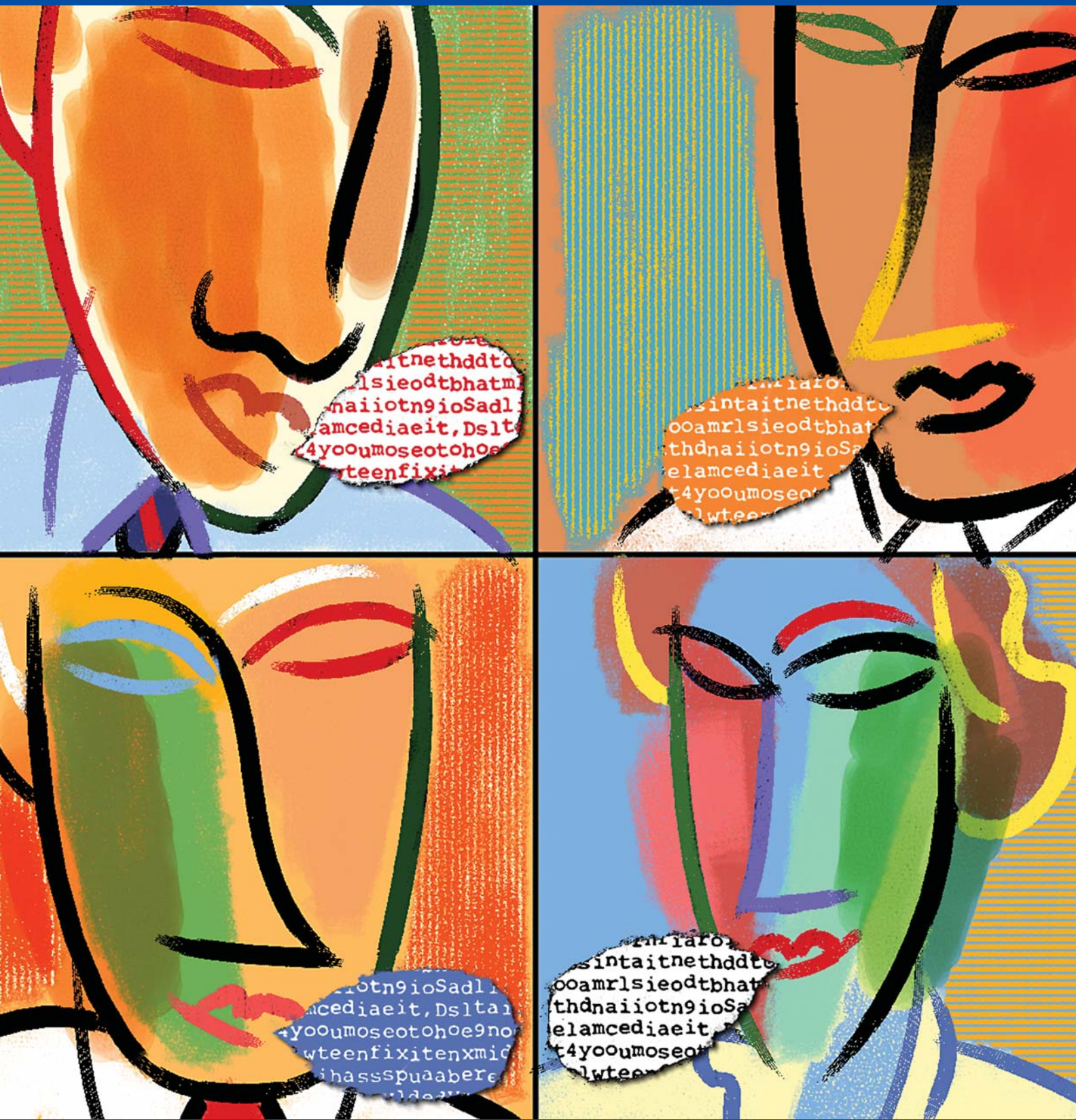
When everyone has had a chance to share his input and

concern, the group needs to come together and discuss how everyone's needs can be met. Then you can move on to clarifying the structure that will best meet them. How will you make decisions? How are you going to put together work plans and hold each other accountable for getting it done? How are you going to deal with disagreements? If you are going to need more money, how are you going to raise it?

Only after all these preliminary steps have been taken — perhaps several meetings into your alliance — are you ready to roll up your sleeves, set your goals, put together your plans and get to work.



# 10 Tips on Talking to LEGISLATORS



atnethddto  
lsieodtphatm  
naitotn9ioSadl  
amcediaeit, Dslt  
4yooumoseotohoe  
teenfixit

If you want canopy, you need cash. You also need supportive regulations and ordinances. To get these things, you need to pull a legislator or two into your court. That can be tough, given that legislators' budgets and calendars are perpetually tight, and competition for both is stiff.

"The most important thing in dealing with legislators is to be heard above the din," says Joe Wilson, executive director of Greening Milwaukee, a tree preservation nonprofit organization. "There are a lot of other organizations out there clamoring for their attention, and many of them are bigger than yours. You have to be heard above that."

Here are 10 tips for making sure your legislator can hear you.

nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization. "What is their job, where did they go to school, what are their hobbies? Knowing these types of things beforehand can help you establish a rapport when you do meet."

**2 SPEAK AS A GROUP.** Size can matter, so whenever possible, align your organization with other like-minded groups. Be sure, however, that you are all delivering the same message. "The Riverkeeper groups are very good at this," says Justine Thompson, executive director of GreenLaw (formerly the Georgia Center for Law in the Public Interest). "Because they work in a particular localized area to protect and restore a particular river or rivers, they develop relationships with their local representatives. But they coordinate with all the other Riverkeeper groups to send the same message."

Wilson agrees with the importance of collaboration. "The most effective I've been with legislators is when I bring different constituents together to make our case," says Wilson. "I partner with Sierra Club and Nature Conservancy. Trees might not be funded this year, but the Clean Water Act may be. So, through collaborating with other groups, I'll find a way to put a tree in there."

**1 DO YOUR HOMEWORK.** Before asking for your first meeting, you need to know your legislator. What committees is he on? What is his voting history? "You've got to take your message to the right person," says Alice Ewen Walker, executive director of Alliance for Community Trees, a national organization supporting community forestry. "If he is on the transportation committee, he might be able to write into current legislation that a percentage of funding for new roads goes into green infrastructure, but he wouldn't be the person to help you if you wanted to get public health research done on the benefits of green infrastructure."

You need to know his issues and his voters. If he is a child and family advocate, try to couch your message in benefits for children. If he is from an urban district plagued with poverty and unemployment, talking about "tree collar" jobs likely will resonate with him.

Beyond knowing your legislator as a legislator, you should know him as a person, says Jill Johnson, interim director of Georgia Conservation Voters, a statewide

**3 BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR.** That means thinking like a marathoner instead of a sprinter. Visit your lawmaker in his office. Call him on the phone. Write him letters. Invite him to speak to your group. "Contact your legislator consistently," says Johnson. "You need to be in touch with them all the time, even when you aren't asking them for anything. Contact them to thank them for something they did recently. Call to give them some useful information. You'll eventually



“Be specific in your ask. Say how much money you need, in what fiscal year and where the money will come from.”

— Alice Ewen Walker



become a known quantity, and then your voice might be the one heard before that big vote.”

**4 RESPECT THEIR TIME.** When you do meet with your legislator, don't waste any of his or your time. Depending when and with whom you'll be meeting, you'll probably be allowed anywhere from 5 to 30 minutes. Arrive early for your appointment, and be prepared with brief, direct talking points. Stick to one very clear message that states the problem, the solution and how the legislator can act on the solution.

And don't be disappointed if you don't get to meet with the actual legislator, but with an aide instead. “The staff is very important,” says Walker. “Many times it is the aides who write the position papers or the legislation. They are in a position to influence the legislator and remind him of your concerns during a crucial moment.”

**5 SET A POSITIVE TONE.** Start the conversation by thanking the legislator for something he's done recently — a bill he introduced or a community event he attended. And if you are from his district, be sure to state that up front. If you're not, try to bring someone along who is. Legislators know who elects them. Finally, be passionate and informative.

“You have to be willing to be an advocate for your cause,” says Wilson. “By that, I mean you've got to be dedicated, you've got to be passionate. These men and women who run for office are passionate about being in office. They need to hear your passion.”

**6 FRAME THE PROBLEM IN A WAY THE LEGISLATOR CAN RELATE TO.** If you've done your homework and know the values and interests of your legislator, you should be able to figure out a way to position your cause in a way that will capture his attention. “Your legislator may not care about the specific issues of trees,” says Johnson. “But he may care about the economic impact of unhealthy trees on tourism.”

It also means knowing the political climate. “The issue in Georgia today is water,” says Wilson. “If you walk into your legislator's office now and try to talk about trees, the attention you're going to get is minimal. But if you go

in and say, ‘We have a major water issue in our state and I can help,’ you've got his attention. Then you can talk about how trees can help with the water shortage.”

**7 ASK HIM DIRECTLY TO SUPPORT YOUR POSITION.** “The most common mistake I see advocates make is spending all their time explaining the issue and then leaving with no call to action,” says Walker. “If you have 15 minutes, you don't want to spend the first 13 giving lots of background and detail and leave off telling him what you'd like him to do. And be specific in your ask. Don't say, ‘We think urban forestry needs more money.’ Instead, say how much money you need, in what fiscal year and where the money will come from.”

**8 OBEY THE 50/50 RULE.** “You should be talking no more than 50 percent of the time,” says Johnson. “Make sure you are really listening to what the legislator is telling you. You want to go away having learned something about the legislator or his position on the issue. Most legislators will tell you if they will have a problem supporting the issue, but you've got to listen to hear it. Some of them tell you more directly than others.”

**9 BE HONEST AND FACTUAL.** If you don't know the answer, tell your legislator you don't know it but will find it out and get back to him. Acknowledge the opposing view. Presenting both sides of the issue with all the facts will build your credibility. “One of the first things I was taught in lobbying was that you gain credibility in drops, but you lose it in buckets,” says Johnson.

**10 LEAVE MATERIAL.** It's often a good idea to leave behind a handout or flyer. However, steer clear of lengthy essays or bound reports. Instead, leave behind a fact sheet with three to five bullet points and compelling visuals that help tell your story.

“We're really pretty lucky in urban forestry,” says Walker. “We already have a white hat going in the door, and legislators are going to be predisposed to trust you and to listen to what you say. You just have to get out there and say it, and say it in a way so you are heard.”

# The People Factor

Three dedicated volunteers with Trees Columbus recently stepped into the spotlight to share their passion for urban forestry. Here's how they're using their time, talent and energy to make a difference.

**RHONDA CLIPPINGER** is a contract bookkeeper and an active volunteer for various organizations. Even so, when a Trees Columbus board member approached her and asked if she would chair the membership and special events committee, she said “Sure!”

“My job is flexible, and I really enjoy being able to have a hand in the good work Trees Columbus does,” she says.

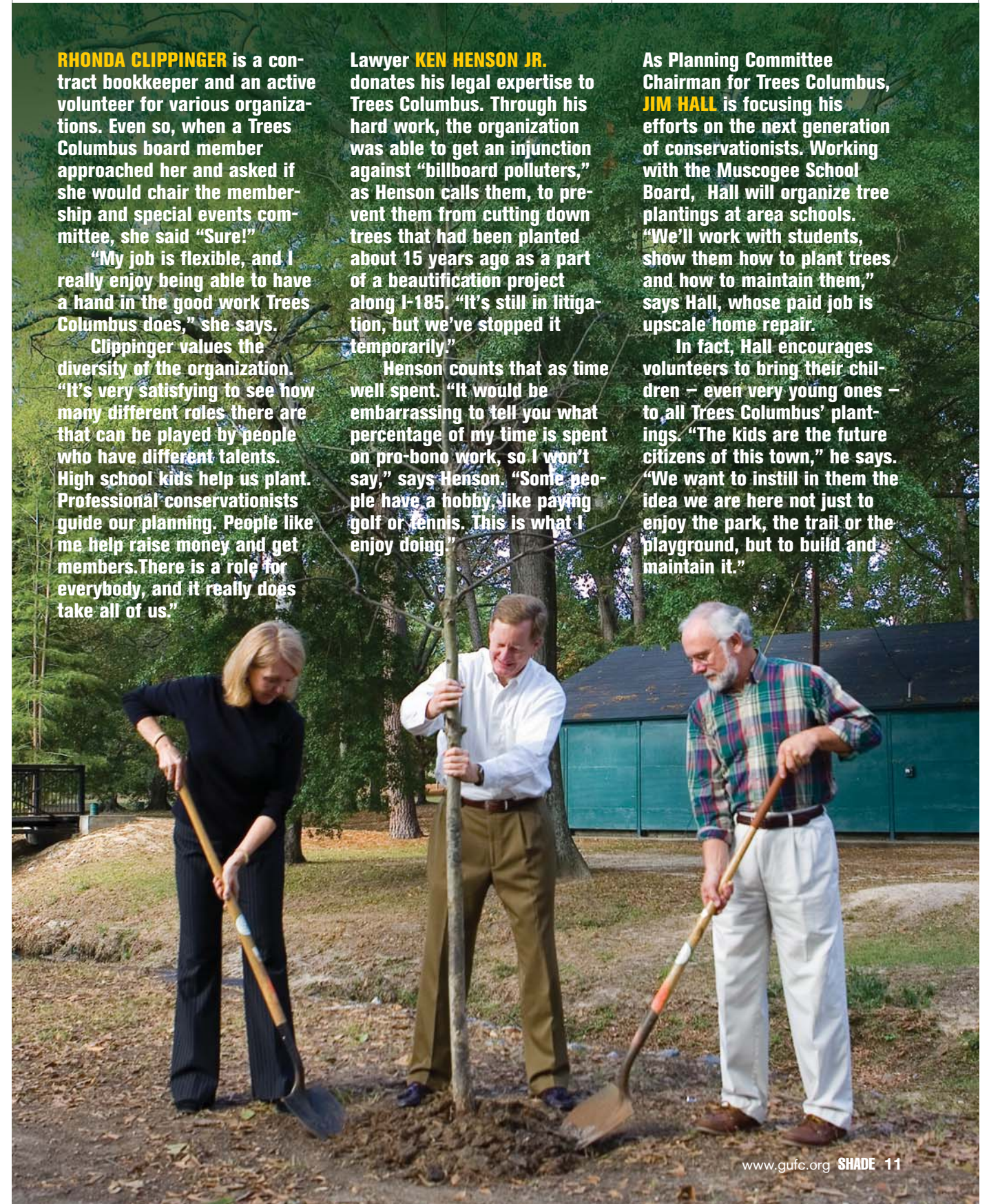
Clippinger values the diversity of the organization. “It's very satisfying to see how many different roles there are that can be played by people who have different talents. High school kids help us plant. Professional conservationists guide our planning. People like me help raise money and get members. There is a role for everybody, and it really does take all of us.”

Lawyer **KEN HENSON JR.** donates his legal expertise to Trees Columbus. Through his hard work, the organization was able to get an injunction against “billboard polluters,” as Henson calls them, to prevent them from cutting down trees that had been planted along I-185. “It's still in litigation, but we've stopped it temporarily.”

Henson counts that as time well spent. “It would be embarrassing to tell you what percentage of my time is spent on pro-bono work, so I won't say,” says Henson. “Some people have a hobby, like paying golf or tennis. This is what I enjoy doing.”

As Planning Committee Chairman for Trees Columbus, **JIM HALL** is focusing his efforts on the next generation of conservationists. Working with the Muscogee School Board, Hall will organize tree plantings at area schools. “We'll work with students, show them how to plant trees and how to maintain them,” says Hall, whose paid job is upscale home repair.

In fact, Hall encourages volunteers to bring their children — even very young ones — to all Trees Columbus' plantings. “The kids are the future citizens of this town,” he says. “We want to instill in them the idea we are here not just to enjoy the park, the trail or the playground, but to build and maintain it.”





# How to Recruit and Keep VOLUNTEERS

If communities were trees, their governments would be their trunks, providing structure and strength. Their businesses and industries would be the leaves, both consuming and producing. But volunteers would be their roots, supplying the energy, the nourishment and the foundation for everything else.

Volunteers are critical in nearly every facet of life. They keep our public schools running. They help feed, house and care for the poor. They man the polls at elections, pass the collection plate in churches and pick up litter in the parks. For nonprofits, such as tree boards, conservation alliances and preservation task forces, they are the lifeblood of the organizations.

Volunteers provide critically needed free labor, but their contributions go far beyond that. Volunteers bring with them a high level of enthusiasm, a diversity of talents and experiences and a tie-in to the larger community.

“Volunteers drive our organization,” says Marcia Bansley, executive director of Trees Atlanta. “They are the ones who get out there and do the work. They are the reason we exist.”

But how, in these days of 80-hour work weeks, can you attract and, more critically, retain the volunteers you need? By using “smart volunteer management,” according to Eleanor Hooks, president of Decatur-based The Smart Change Group.

“Volunteers tend to come in gangbusters and then lose steam,” says Hooks. “And many times, they don’t leave feeling very good. They are either burned out or ran

into a problem or conflict. If you want to have a successful volunteer program, you must create a structure that welcomes them into the organization, allows them to pursue their own goals as well as those of your organization’s and provides a graceful way to exit.”

*Creating such a structure involves five steps:*

## ■ Planning

Before you bring on your first volunteer, you need to lay the foundation by answering some basic questions. Why should this volunteer program exist? What impact will the volunteers have? What budget do you need for the volunteer program?

“It’s easy to overlook that one,” says Hooks. “But even though you are not paying them, volunteers incur some expenses. They need a space to work, they may need supplies, and you may want to recognize them in some way, perhaps with a luncheon or with small gifts. Very likely the paid staff will have to devote some time as well, either training them, supervising them or working alongside them.”

You should have a clear and specific job description for volunteers, just as you do for paid staff. That ensures that their contribution will be meaningful, and it also clarifies expectations and helps fuel their commitment to your organization. As part of that job description, you should include the way volunteers can leave the assignment — either a time frame or after a certain project is done.

Recruitment and training are the first steps in keeping these teams of Trees Atlanta volunteers engaged and enthusiastic.



## ■ Recruitment

Once you know what you want the volunteers to do, you can start to think about the best type of person to do it. What qualities and skills would your ideal volunteer have? You also need to ask yourself why this person would be interested in volunteering — what is in it for him? Even though they are giving their time for free, volunteers need to feel they are getting something in return — satisfaction from giving back to the community, a chance to use a skill they don’t get to use in their paid job, fellowship with other like-minded volunteers, etc.

And where do you find these volunteers? For one-time or limited-time events, you may be able to get all the helping hands you need by putting an ad in the local paper or on the radio. Keep Albany-Dougherty Beautiful is able to muster enough volunteers for its tree plantings by sending media releases to the local TV stations and newspapers. Judy Bowles, the group’s executive director, also found tying an event to a cause can be extremely helpful.

“We created an event called ‘Trees of Courage,’ which was a living tree memorial to the fallen American

military in Iraq,” says Bowles. “At that point, there were 600 fallen soldiers, so we wanted to plant 600 trees. Over 300 volunteers turned out for that, and they planted all 600 trees and another 220 shrubs. It was the largest volunteer turnout we’ve ever had.”

If you are looking for volunteers to make an ongoing commitment, however, you likely will need to do more than place an ad. You’ll need to ask the person directly. Indeed, the No. 1 reason people say they don’t volunteer is because “no one asked.” Asking means more than posting a notice — it means, ideally, a face-to-face request.

What you say is as important as how you say it. Your message needs to point out what is special about that volunteer and how that will help the organization. Statements such as, “You relate to children so well, we were hoping you could help with our elementary school outdoor classroom project,” or “We are looking for a lawyer to provide some pro-bono work, and I thought of you because you



**VOLUNTEERS DON'T GET PAID,  
NOT BECAUSE THEY'RE  
WORTHLESS, BUT BECAUSE  
THEY'RE PRICELESS."**

— Volunteer Sherry Anderson

are so passionate about your practice," play to the person's sense of worth and may convince them to come on board.

If they say "yes," encourage them to bring their friends. And if they say "no"?

"Remember, 'no' simply means 'not today,'" says Hooks. "Never try to pressure someone. You want to leave them with a good impression of you and your organization. They may say 'yes' tomorrow."

### ■■■■ Orientation and training

This is the part that is too often given short shrift. Organizations tend to breathe a huge sigh of relief once they get their volunteers to sign on and then turn their attention elsewhere. But if a volunteer doesn't receive proper orientation and training, he won't feel connected to your organization and may be unable to do what he signed on to do. "If someone is thrown into a situation without appropriate training, they feel incompetent," says Hooks. "Nobody likes to feel incompetent, so they leave."

Of course, not all volunteers need training. "Many of our volunteers come to us with a skill set that we need," says Dorothy McDaniel, executive director of Trees Columbus. "Lawyers, for example, or event planners. They already have those skills, so we don't train them. In a sense, we almost work for them." (See "The People Factor," page 11.)

But even if volunteers don't need any training, it's important to organize a welcome and orientation. Introduce volunteers to staff members, give them a tour of the facility, if appropriate, and host a welcome breakfast or some sort of ceremony to thank them in advance for their contributions. Make sure you give them the space and the materials they need.

At the beginning of every tree planting, Trees Atlanta does a demonstration of the correct way to carry and plant the trees. "Then we explain the purpose of what they are doing," says Bansley. "We don't just say, 'You are here to plant trees.' We explain why we are in that neighborhood or location. We tell them how what they are doing today

is helping create a better environment for tomorrow."

Having the training and tools necessary to do the job and an understanding of how that job fits into the grand scheme are what create a sense of commitment. "Nearly everything we do in organizations is relationship-based," says Hooks. "If you do not establish a relationship between the volunteer and your organization, there is no incentive for him to show up."

### ■■■■ Supervision and evaluation

"This gets sticky for a lot of people," says Hooks. "They think, 'These are volunteers! I can't give them an evaluation!' But volunteers are simply employees who are not paid. They need feedback just like the paid staff."

Sure, they are not bucking for a raise or a promotion, but volunteers often appreciate the opportunity to develop additional skills or contribute in different ways. A volunteer may sign on to help stuff envelopes, but eventually he'll tire of that and want to do something more interesting that uses his skills and abilities.

Volunteers also need a chance to inject their own ideas. That not only infuses your group with fresh perspectives, it keeps the volunteers energized and feeling connected.

You also need to continually assess your volunteers for signs of burnout. You may step in and suggest a break or a different task. It may be time for that volunteer to leave, and you can help him exit with good feelings.

### ■■■■ Recognition

Every volunteer needs to know his contribution is recognized and valued. Whether you post kudos in your organization's newsletter, host a volunteer luncheon or pass out individual gifts, say "Thank you" often and sincerely. If possible, pinpoint the value a volunteer contributed — "That used to take us two weeks! With your help we were able to get it done in one!" or "Those students really lit up when you showed them how to plant a tree."

Trees Atlanta knows the importance of a thank-you. After every tree planting, the whole crew gets together for pizza. If it's been a particularly trying day — relentless rain or sizzling heat — Trees Atlanta picks up the tab. And when a volunteer has worked on five plantings, he earns a Trees Atlanta T-shirt. "People are very proud of their shirts," says Bansley. "They wear them to the plantings and the newer volunteers notice."

"Volunteers are the difference between success and failure for many organizations," continues Bansley. "You just have to have the courage to ask." 🌿



# Revitalizing CITY FORESTS

Brilliant foliage greeted urban foresters when they gathered to connect and collaborate at the **Georgia Urban Forest Council's 17th Annual Conference & Awards Luncheon**, held Oct. 31 to Nov. 2, 2007, in Rome. On the final day, two area elected officials joined a panel discussion moderated by Alice Ewen Walker, executive director of Alliance for Community Trees, a national organization supporting community forestry. The officials — **Commissioner Anne Rigas**, representative from Ward 2 in the City of Rome, and **Councilman Charlie Bethel**, alderman from Ward 4 in the City of Dalton — shared their thoughts and concerns about their cities' urban forests. Here is a synopsis of their discussion:

**Walker:** Can you describe the condition of your urban forest?

**Rigas:** The city of Rome has been designated as a Tree City USA for the past 16 years. Since 1986 the city has planted 50 trees each year, and the city has over 400 trees in eight different species growing in its nursery. Additionally, within the city of Rome is the 311-acre Marshall Forest Preserve, which is one of the last remaining old growth forests in northwest Georgia. In 1966, the Marshall Forest became the first national natural landmark designated in Georgia by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

**Bethel:** I'd have to report that the condition of our urban forest is mixed. We have some really wonderful parts of the city of Dalton, particularly the historic districts, which have beautiful tree canopy. We have other parts of town that are in-between, and we have other parts that are challenges.

Dalton is a community that grew exponentially with the boom of the carpet industry and I-75. There was a rush to develop, and for 10 to 20 years, there was a marked lack of interest in urban forestry. They wanted parking spaces, roads, buildings. Like Rome, Dalton has been a Tree City USA for the last decade and a half, but the decisions of the past impact our urban forest today.

In Dalton, we try very hard to look at partnership models. We try to work with developers, with property owners, with businesses. As a result, our urban forest is mixed and improving, and that's the real key — it's improving.





**Walker: What is your funding mechanism for maintenance, management and tree planting, and who is responsible?**

**Rigas:** We've been very fortunate in Rome to have slower growth and planned growth. Since 1986, the city has allotted \$8,000 annually for the purchase of seedlings. Spending per capita on tree-related expenses is approximately \$3.96 a person, which totals \$139,000 since 2006.

**Bethel:** We fund our urban forest in two primary ways: public dollars and private dollars. We all talk about public dollars, but we need to recognize that private dollars impact our urban forest. In Dalton, we have a tree ordinance that requires — for commercial and industrial development — specified planting based on disturbed soil and impervious surface. So we require the private sector to spend money on urban forestry.

We do have public funds. In our public works department, we have a budget for our tree board. One of the programs we do fund is 'Partners in Planting.' In right-of-way areas, we work with landowners and we'll provide the labor if they'll buy the tree.

**Walker: What kind of development regulations do your communities have in place?**

**Rigas:** In Rome, we have the conservation and replacement program. We recently attempted to revitalize our tree advisory committee with new appointments with the ultimate goal of revising our existing tree ordinance, just so we can address the issue of conservation. We want to make sure we are doing all we can to preserve our trees.

“By being flexible, we are getting more and larger trees. Our ordinance needs to have that kind of flexibility included in it.”

— Charlie Bethel

**Bethel:** Like Rome, we are always looking at our tree ordinance. One of the things we are always looking at is: How comfortable are we with getting into residential development and residential cutting? Do we want to have some standards saying that before you cut a tree of this size, you, at least, need to get a permit? We need to revisit that.

We also need to revisit some of our standards for commercial planting to make them more flexible. For example, the ordinance says you have to plant this close to the street. However, in some areas that means planting under power lines, so you are talking understory trees. We granted a variance allowing a developer in that situation to plant farther back from the street, but he is planting larger caliper trees and more trees than are required. By being flexible, we are getting more and larger trees. Our ordinance needs to have that kind of flexibility included in it.

**Walker: When selling the benefits of trees, is their heritage value a big selling point?**

**Bethel:** I do think the heritage message is a strong piece for getting people behind the urban forest, but it needs to be in terms of a concept, in terms of the idea that this is what we are trying to create.

We're very excited in Dalton. Two years ago, the American Forest Foundation selected Dalton to be the planting site of Georgia's Liberty Tree. In the American Revolution, all of the original 13 colonies and states rallied around a Liberty Tree. The last surviving Liberty Tree was in Maryland, a tulip poplar. Fifteen saplings are the offspring of the last Liberty Tree, and they gave one to each of the original states. They selected Dalton as the site for Georgia's sapling, so we have a young tulip poplar next to our city hall. This tree has symbolism that harkens back to what our founding fathers valued — strength, wisdom and freedom. Now that's a story we can tell.”



## THE LEGACY MESSAGE

The mission of the Georgia Urban Forest Council is “to sustain Georgia's green legacy by helping communities grow healthy trees.” GUF's Executive Director **Mary Lynne Beckley** explains how the organization recently discovered, through a commissioned survey, that “legacy” is a word that holds a great deal of importance for Georgians.

**SHADE: Tell us about the recent survey – what did GUF learn?**

**MLB:** In 2007, The Georgia Urban Forest Council and the Georgia Forestry Commission worked with a marketing research firm called (r)evolution partners, who conducted a survey of Georgians. (r)evolution partners spent a large part of the year asking citizens how important trees and the environment were to them. Many questions and statements were put before the individuals, but the concept that resonated the strongest for people when asked what would motivate them to care for trees and the environment was the “Create Your Legacy” concept. The “Create Your Legacy” message is that by nurturing the urban forest and caring for the environment, individuals can ensure a healthy world for future generations.

**SHADE: What does this tell GUF about Georgians and their level of concern for trees and the environment?**

**MLB:** People instinctively know that trees and a healthy urban forest are part of a healthy environment, and people really do care about sustaining a healthy world for future generations; they just sometimes don't know what to do and don't realize how much of an impact one person can make.

**SHADE: How can individual citizens create a legacy for the next generation? Specifically, what can each individual do?**

**MLB:** Teach youngsters early that the earth is our home and the urban forest keeps our communities good places to live. Teach them

that without the urban forest – the trees around our homes, schools and businesses – our towns and cities would be desolate, barren places with no birds, no shade, no clean air, no healthy ecosystems. Plant trees with children. Years later, the memory will be a precious one, and the trees will have cleaned the air, contributed to stormwater management, housed many a bird family, and shaded homes and buildings on hot days.

Individuals can help by getting involved with their community tree board or volunteer tree-planting organization – or start one! They should also seek community leaders who are concerned about a greener world, which starts in our own towns and cities.

Developers can be incredible heroes in this endeavor. By working with existing trees and not clear-cutting; by disturbing the natural topography as little as possible; and by using pervious pavement and other low-impact materials, developers can create healthy places to live, work and conduct business, and people are drawn to these areas. Future generations will know the names of these builders/developers and that they were a part of the effort to hold onto a green world – a long-lasting legacy.

### Smart Forestry Links

Alliance for Community Trees  
[www.actrees.org](http://www.actrees.org)

American Forest Foundation  
[www.affoundation.org](http://www.affoundation.org)

Georgia Conservation Voters  
[www.gavoters.org](http://www.gavoters.org)

Greening Milwaukee  
[www.greeningmilwaukee.org](http://www.greeningmilwaukee.org)

GreenLaw  
[www.green-law.org](http://www.green-law.org)

Institute for Conservation Leadership  
[www.icl.org](http://www.icl.org)

Keep Albany-Dougherty Beautiful  
[www.albany.ga.us/kadb/kadb\\_index.htm](http://www.albany.ga.us/kadb/kadb_index.htm)

(r)evolution partners  
[www.r-evolutionpartners.com](http://www.r-evolutionpartners.com)

The Smart Change Group  
[www.smartchange.org](http://www.smartchange.org)

Tree City USA  
[www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org)

Trees Atlanta  
[www.treesatlanta.org](http://www.treesatlanta.org)

Trees Columbus  
[www.treescolumbus.org](http://www.treescolumbus.org)



[www.gufc.org](http://www.gufc.org)



[www.gatrees.org](http://www.gatrees.org)



[www.urbanforestrysouth.org](http://www.urbanforestrysouth.org)





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