

A green rectangular graphic with a repeating pattern of stylized leaves. In the center is a white rectangular box containing the text "FOREST RELEAF OF MISSOURI IMPACT STORIES" in green, all-caps, sans-serif font.

**FOREST RELEAF  
OF MISSOURI**  
IMPACT STORIES

**"If my kids have kids, and they ask what I did to help, they can say I planted trees. That's why I feel like I'm doing something, and not just bemoaning the fate of the world."**

**-John Milton**

## **Water Truck John**

Roughly ten years ago John Milton went on his first planting expedition with Forest ReLeaf trees. Having planted as many trees as he could on his personal property, he decided to expand outward when he heard about Forest ReLeaf's free tree program. However, it wasn't long after he began that he found himself concerned by the lack of maintenance on the trees he planted. "This is self-defeating," John noted. "If you can't water a tree after you plant it, the chances are it's going to die. Unless you're really lucky."

John knew hauling buckets of water would be labor intensive and unsustainable long-term. He had to get a watering truck, despite the insurmountable cost. But determination, not luck, motivated John. He began to fundraise for a watering truck. John is happy to report that "people really came through for big yellow", the aptly named large yellow watering truck that is notoriously easy to spot. John ultimately ended up donating big yellow to Forest ReLeaf, but it was not his only contribution. A second white watering truck and about 400 Forest ReLeaf trees planted across the city were born out of his determination. These contributions earned John the nickname "Water Truck John" amongst community members.

Many of his planted trees reside in a stretch of land across the highways near his home. This area, owned by MODOT, was previously devoid of plants; a state that disheartened John. He stewards them with consistent watering and the addition of tree guards, a safety measure to protect trees from early death caused by mower damage. John coordinates

with Forest ReLeaf staff to water the trees, and often recruits his friends. "I get so thrilled when I see that the trees have made it and they're growing. That transformation of a piece of land that was once barren into a mini forest really makes me happy. I can pass by areas that I've been involved with and looking at those trees just brings happiness."



**Forest  
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