



**“It’s a message of new growth and new beginnings. Young trees are examples of potential that get to grow along with the neighborhood.”**

**- Samantha Smugala**

## **Greener Partnerships**

As the young non profit, Pocketparks, follows their mission of turning vacant lots into beautiful community spaces, they rely on community resources. That’s where Forest ReLeaf comes in. When Samantha Smugala, President and Founder of Pocketparks, connected with Forest ReLeaf, the partnership blossomed and in only two years has allowed the planting of over fifty trees at three Pocketparks in the City of St. Louis. The newest project called Ratio Park, located in the Hyde Park Neighborhood that borders I-70 north of downtown, got the addition of thirty trees and shrubs in fall of 2022.

Even though free trees are a joy to receive, Samantha worries about the work of getting them planted each time. At the 2 Acre Park in Midtown, twenty trees were scheduled to be planted. Samantha had worried about the work of planting that many trees in one day. She had hoped the trees would excite the community and allow residents to not only learn how to plant a tree, but to experience it themselves. Samantha was happily surprised as both children and adults were eager to plant their first trees, and got all twenty in the ground in under an hour! Rather than too many, Samantha found that there weren’t enough trees for every community member that was hoping to plant one.

“Putting something on this vacant lot, including a tree, just sends a different message into the world, like ‘this lot has potential, this community has potential’.” As each vacant lot turns into a Pocketpark, Samantha views trees as a symbol – a symbol of new growth and potential, in hopes that as the tree grows, the neighborhood will grow along with it.

To learn more about what Pocketparks is doing, visit <https://www.pocketparks.co/ourparks>



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