

Forest ReLeaf of Missouri

2023 Annual Report

Growing Strong

Forest ReLeaf
OF MISSOURI



Director's Note



The tree planting that launched Forest ReLeaf was along the Mississippi River and activated thousands of volunteers. 30 years later, volunteers planted the organization's 250,000th tree in the same area along the Mississippi Greenway in north St. Louis.

In 1993, a group of tree lovers formed Forest ReLeaf of Missouri with the goal to provide free trees so that anyone could plant a forest in their community.

Around that time, I was the president of the Rosati-Kain High School environment club and reached out seeking support to plant a few trees in the school's courtyard. This connection sparked my passion for nature and nudged this tree-curious teen into a 25-years-and-growing career dedicated to urban forestry and environmental service.

When I reflect on my introduction to the nonprofit where I now serve as Executive Director, I see that a love for trees was just the starting point. Forest ReLeaf empowered me to take action.

Since then, Forest ReLeaf has grown programs and opportunities, making space for everyone to join the mission. The trees I planted in high school are a small part of the collective impact of the Forest ReLeaf effort. Over the past 30 years, this incredible organization has helped get a quarter million trees planted across Missouri, changing the state's landscape in sizable, positive ways.

This past year at Forest ReLeaf, we reflected on 30 years of meaningful work, and embraced conversations and partnerships to make the next 30 years even more transformational for Missouri's canopy.

Some particular points of pride include:

Enhancing education with the grand opening of the John and Corki Moller Education Pavilion and upgrading the Creve Coeur Nursery to a Level 2 Arboretum status.

Increasing access by more than doubling tree deliveries statewide and hosting a St. Louis City distribution event in partnership with Missouri State Parks at our future City Tree Farm at the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site.

Investing in tree stewardship by adding staff dedicated to supporting community planting projects through watering, mulching, and pruning trees.

Responding to community residents' requests for mature tree care, transitioning the Treesilience pilot project into a 5+ year commitment to support high-need removals and pruning to make way for healthy and resilient replacement trees.



Meredith McAvoy Perkins
Executive Director

Meredith with the oak tree she planted at her high school 28 years ago.

2023 Impact

Trees Planted



13.8K

Planting Projects



293

Acres of Canopy Sustained



59

Total Volunteer Hours



13.2K

Missourians Engaged



12.2K

Thank you to all who helped make Missouri a healthier and happier place.

“

It is a pleasure working with the Forest ReLeaf Team. The guidance that the Forest ReLeaf team provides is a shared stewardship of not just the tree itself, but also of the land, and the neighborhood in which it is planted, placed, rooted, and nurtured to grow. Communities flourish amongst such favorable conditions.”

David A. N. Jackson

Creative Consultant and Community Organizer



Thanks to our Sustaining Partners

Missouri Department of Conservation
St. Louis County Parks

Amazon
Ameren Corporation Charitable Trust
American Water
Arbor Day Foundation
Bank of America

Bellwether Foundation
Big River Race Management
Boeing
Bright Funds
Clifford Willard Gaylord Foundation
Conservation Foundation of MO
Charitable Trust
Davey Tree Expert Company

Victor and Selene DeLinieri Charitable
Foundation
Edward Chase Garvey Memorial
Foundation
E. Reuben & Gladys Flora Grant
Charitable Trust
Edward Jones
Ferry Family Fund

Gateway Regional Environmental Fund
Great Rivers Greenway
Heart of Oak Foundation
ICL Specialty Products
International Paper
JM Family Enterprises Inc.
Magnificent Missouri
Mastercard

McPheeters and Rickard Family Fund
Missouri Community Forestry Council
National Christian Foundation
Nature Conservancy
Northwest IP Holdings
Pang Family Charitable Trust
Seed St. Louis
Spire Energy

SSM Health
St. Louis Community Foundation
St. Louis County Library
St. Louis Tree Pros
StraightUp Solar
Trio Foundation of St. Louis
Verizon

Our Dedicated Staff



Elijah Belz
Stewardship Technician



Dan Billman
Nursery Specialist



Rose Bland
Stewardship Technician



Billy Haag
Forestry Manager



Emily Halpin
Office Manager



Rebecca Hankins
Partnerships Manager



Kelly Hicks-Holloway
Environmental Justice Lead



Jake Roeckle
Nursery Manager



Glory Ruiz
Engagement Specialist



Ellen Sulser
Volunteer Coordinator

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Enterprise

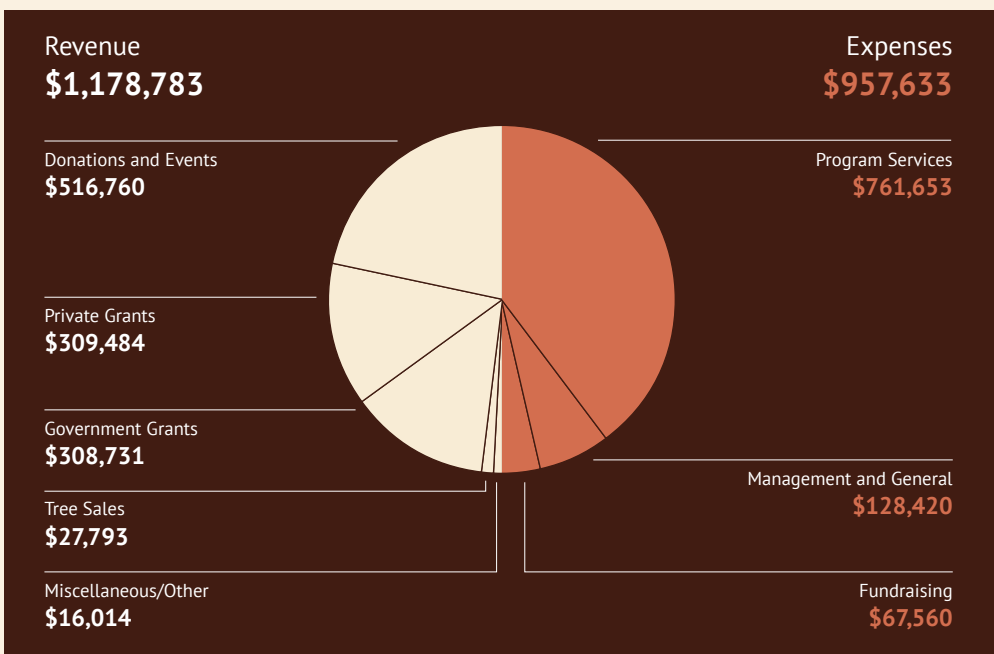
Kara Strider
Associate Administrator,
Barnes-Jewish Hospital

Jesse Stuart
Director of Operations,
Crispy Edge

Steve Taff
OT Professor/Scholars Program
Director,
Washington University

Scott Weitzel
Regulatory & Government Affairs,
Spire Energy

Financial Highlights



Looking Ahead

April 20:
Earth Day in Forest Park

April 27:
Forest ReLeaf Arbor Day at the future
City Tree Farm at the Scott Joplin House

June 1:
Open House and Garden Event at
Forest ReLeaf's new City Office

September 28:
Arbormeister Beer Festival at Forest
ReLeaf's Nursery and Arboretum

Find more information about these and other events at
moreleaf.org/events

Get Involved

People fuel Forest ReLeaf. From tending seedlings at the nursery and planting trees in the community to talking trees with the public and providing critical connections to people and places, volunteers are essential to our success. The experience can also be transformative for the volunteers. You belong at Forest ReLeaf.

“

We cannot protect something we do not love, we cannot love what we do not know, and we cannot know what we do not see. Or hear. Or sense.”

Richard Louv (2012). "The Nature Principle: Reconnecting with Life in a Virtual Age"

Our Programs

Project CommuniTree



Giving free trees to willing planting partners exponentially grows forest canopy across the state by leveraging the power of hyper-local partners and volunteers. Through the CommuniTree Program, individuals, organizations, schools, churches, municipal governments, and neighborhood groups apply for 3-gallon native trees to plant in public and nonprofit locations. Tree pickups are scheduled each spring and fall at our Creve Coeur Nursery and Arboretum, where we grow the 20,000+ trees, or at distribution sites throughout the state. In addition to removing the cost barrier, we enable participants' success through our tool lending library and technical assistance.

Free Trees Distributed

10,518



Native Species Offered

55



Zip Codes Served

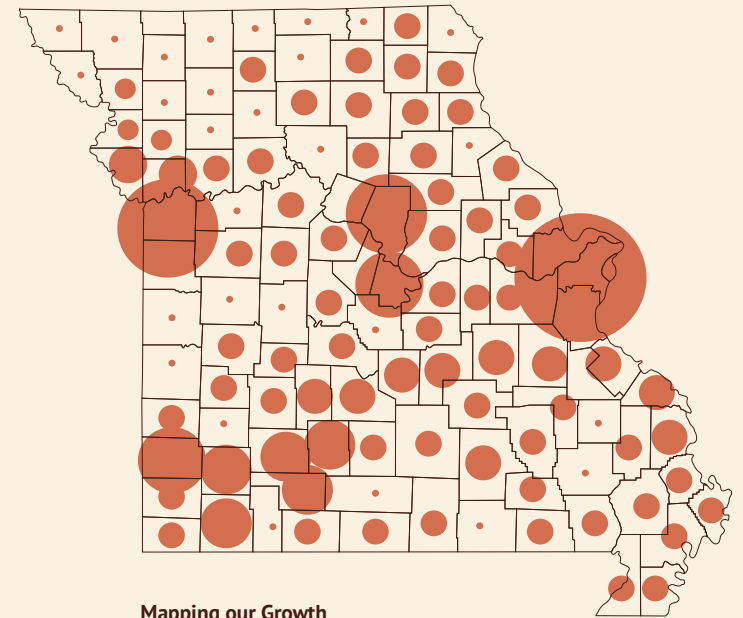
135



“

I can pass by areas that I've been involved with and looking at those trees just brings happiness.”

John Milton, volunteer



Mapping our Growth

Thanks to our ongoing partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation, combined with statewide delivery support from Spire Energy and Amazon, all but one county in Missouri has planted trees from Forest ReLeaf. Worth County, we're coming for you in 2024!

Priority ReLeaf



Tree planting projects in high-need locations come with unique challenges. The Priority ReLeaf Program addresses complex barriers to positive canopy impact by providing access to larger, more robust trees, project development support, volunteer coordination, planting event planning/hosting, and follow-up stewardship. Priority ReLeaf focuses service in historically under-resourced, low-canopy urban areas as well as in communities suffering from invasive species challenges or natural disasters.

Priority ReLeaf Trees Planted

2,331



Forest ReLeaf Supported Planting Events

18



Trees Stewarded by Canopy Crew

1,565



“

This [Treesilience] removal not only ensures a safer environment but also opens the door for new life and nature to thrive. We eagerly anticipate the planting of new trees, which will contribute to the vibrancy and beauty of our neighborhood.”

Samantha Simpson, North St. Louis resident



Tiny Forest

In an effort to boost biodiversity, Forest ReLeaf partnered with St. Louis City Forestry, Great Rivers Greenway, and neighborhood groups to pilot a Miyawaki-inspired “tiny forest” along the Christy Greenway to stabilize a riparian buffer, promote native species, and minimize invasives.



Treesilience

Residents in under-resourced communities often express frustration and fear of trees due to the maintenance burden and high risk of tree failure in areas that suffer from disinvestment. A 2-year pilot project proved that a holistic approach that includes intentional community engagement, removal of dead/dying trees, replanting site-appropriate species, and watering support builds trust and creates positive canopy change. Forest ReLeaf recently hired a full-time Environmental Justice Lead to build a formal Treesilience Program.



Stewardship

Tree planting is the first step in establishing a healthy forest, but follow-up watering, mulching, trunk protection, and pruning can make all the difference for successful establishment. All Forest ReLeaf sponsored planting projects in St. Louis City are supported with 2 years of water and monitoring.

Outreach Education



Connecting people with nature and providing information about tree care are essential to growing tree canopy. The Forest ReLeaf Team presents at professional conferences like Missouri Parks and Recreation Association, green industry workshops like Conservation Training Series, and community spaces like the St. Louis County Library in addition to programming at our nursery and arboretum in Creve Coeur Park. There's something for everyone. For those seeking a comprehensive understanding, we offer a 6-week Tree-Keeper course with hands-on experience, while tree-curious learners are invited to guided walks along greenways. By building participants' excitement and confidence about trees, Forest ReLeaf activates our community to take action in protecting and caring for our urban forest.

Events Supported

156



TreeKeepers Trained

25



ForestKeeper Network Members

2,984



“

Most people (even me) are so ignorant about trees. They are NOT just big plants! [After the TreeKeeper Course] I am much more enthusiastic about the science of trees, and how people need to know so much more.”

TreeKeeper Participant



ForestKeeper

The Missouri ForestKeeper network mobilizes statewide participation in meaningful citizen science activities and forest stewardship. This field trip to George O. White nursery, where Forest ReLeaf gets our seedling stock, exposed participants to the seed collection and propagation process.



Canopy Crew

Six summer interns joined Forest ReLeaf in 2023 to support community tree stewardship through watering, mulching, and field inventory. The crew also enjoyed weekly field trips and professional development to expand their understanding of careers in urban forestry.



Volunteer Experiences



We know that meaningful experiences in nature give people agency and improve health. Forest ReLeaf is committed to offering valuable volunteer opportunities to all ages and skill levels. We rely on volunteers not only to maintain trees year-round at the Creve Coeur Nursery and Arboretum but also to plant and steward trees in communities sitewide. Dedicated individuals donate their time weekly while others may come with a group for one-time support. All experiences include an educational component, so that participants grow with the trees. In 2023 we increased volunteer participation by over 20%.

Regular Nursery Volunteers

152



Community Volunteers (directly engaged)

1,340



Volunteer Groups

36



“

All I can add is that there is no organization in St. Louis that treats their volunteers as well as Forest ReLeaf. I am a fan!”

Michael Meridith, TreeKeeper Participant



Girl Scouts participating in the Climate Change Challenge came together to plant 91 trees of five species at Little Creve Coeur Park.



Groups like Alpha Kappa Alpha, here at Ruth Porter Mall along the Great Rivers Greenway, support community tree planting events, spring potting efforts, summer mulching and more.



Community Engagement



30th Anniversary at City Tree Farm Site

We celebrated our 30th anniversary with a new Arbor Day tree distribution event, giving away 125 trees at the Scott Joplin State Historic Site. Attendees provided critical community feedback to inform plans for the future City Tree Farm slated for the site in 2024.



Mti Wraps

Mti Wraps is a community-centered project in North St. Louis City. Artist Dail Chambers, supported by Forest ReLeaf and the City of St. Louis Parks and Forestry Division, created a solution to help increase tree survival rates, particularly in Fairground Park, and to respond to the community's desire for beauty. "Mti" (pronounced m-tee) means "tree" in Swahili.



Signature Events

Events at the Nursery & Arboretum, like the annual fall Arbormeister beer festival, group tours, and seedling potting days, help connect people to Forest ReLeaf's mission and inspire future action.



Pear Buyback

In partnership with the Missouri Invasive Plant Council, Forest ReLeaf distributed 800 native trees to replace invasive callery pear trees in residential landscapes across the state (KC, St. Louis, Hannibal, Columbia, Cape Girardeau, and Springfield). Individuals were encouraged to remove their invasive plants and establish a more appropriate species that supports a sustainable ecosystem.

2023 Tree Recipients

parks / nature areas

70

cities / towns

50

neighborhood groups

45

schools

39

community organizations

30

religious institutions

11

cemeteries

8

libraries

2

Ambois Drive Woods • AmeriCorps St. Louis • Animal Protective Association • Annie Malone • Antioch in The Ville • Autumn Lakes • Baring City Park • Barrington Elementary • Beckemeier Conservation Area • Bee Found • Bellefontaine Cemetery • Belleview Farms Park • Belly Acres • Bethel Hills Community • Betty Wheeler CIA • **Beyond Housing** • Black Creek Stream Embankment • Blackburn Park • Broomsedge Ct. • Bruce Normile Juvenile Justice Center • BSA Troop 766 • CAASTLC's Seeds of Hope Farm • Camp Moval • Carthage High School • Castle Pines • **Castlewood State Park** • Caulks Hill Subdivision • Center for Spiritual Living • Central Primary School • Centralia Parks and Recreation Department • Chapel of the Lake • Chapel Woods • Christian Church of Carl Junction • Citizens Committee For Flood Relief • City Garden Montessori • City of Boonville - Harley Park • City of Branson • City of Brentwood • City of Canton • City of Cape Girardeau • City of Cassville • City of Clever • City of Collinsville • City of Columbia, IL • City of Creve Coeur • City of Eureka • Flat Creek Trail • Kircher Park • City of Excelsior Springs • City of Fayette • City of Fenton • City of Forsyth - Shadowrock Park • City of Fulton • City of Glendale • **City of Hannibal** • City of Harrisonville • City of Jennings • City of Joplin • City of Kansas City • City of Kirksville • City of Lamar • City of Monett - South Park • **City of Ozark** • City of Parkville • City of Perryville - City Park • City of Petersburg, IL • City of Puxico • City of Raymore • City of Republic • City of Rock Hill • City of Shrewsbury • **City of Springfield** • City of Springfield, IL • City of St. Joseph Park Department • **City of St. Louis** • City of St. Peters • City of Steelville • City of Sunset Hills • City of Washington • City of Webster Groves • City of Wentzville • Claymont Elementary • Coahoma Orchards / Yeyo Arts Educational Gardens • Columbia Center for Urban Agriculture • St. Charles County • Creve Coeur Lake • Concordia Cemetery • Country Lane Woods • St. Louis County Parks • Courtney Chess Club • Covenant Christian School • Craig Elementary • **Crowder State Park** • Crystal Lake Social Club • Delmar Divine • Delmar Ave. • Doniphan FFA • EarthDance • Pocket Parks • Ellendale Neighborhood Association • Elmwood Cemetery, KC • Elsberry High School • St. Genevieve Wildlife Area • **Fairground Park** • Fern Ridge High School • First Church of Christ, Scientist • Flora Place Parkway • Forest Hill Calvary Cemetery • **Forest Park Forever** • Foristell Manors • Frontenac Garden Club • Fulton Stream Team • Galleria Hillside • Gateway Middle School • George Owens Nature Park • **George Washington Carver School** • Givens Elementary School • Good Journey Development Foundation • Gravois Park • **Great Rivers Greenway** • Greenwood Cemetery - Hillsdale • **Habitat for Humanity of St. Charles County** • Harmony United Methodist Church • Highway 141 & Manors Way - MODOT • Hodgen Tech Academy • Hunters Heights/Hunters Green • Jefferson Barracks Disc Golf Course • Jefferson City Parks • Jefferson College Nature Trail • Jet Banks Park • Jewish Community Center • Kansas City Fire Station 29 • Katy Park • KC Farm School • Keep Kirkwood Green Association • Kickapoo Creek, Peoria County • Kirksville City Park • Kirkwood Early Childhood Center • Kol Rinah • L'Arche St. Louis • Ladue 5th Grade Center • Lafayette Park Conservancy • Lafayette Square Restoration Committee • Lake St. Louis • Laurie City Hall • Lebanon Rotary • Legacy Preservation Enterprise • Linda Hall Library • Lindbergh High School • Lindenwood Park • Little Creek Nature Area (Ferguson-Florissant School District) • Little Creve Coeur Ecological Area • Lusher Elementary • Lutheran Senior Services Community Garden • Macklind Mile • Magnolia Place Condo • Maple Acres • Marlborough Community Coalition • Martha Lafite Nature Sanctuary • Marycrest Farms • Mason Ridge Elementary • Metropolitan CC - Maple Woods Campus • Missouri Conservation Corps Kiwanis Park and MKT Trail • Missouri Department of Conservation • **Cape Girardeau Nature Center** • City of Moberly - Rothwell Park • Morrison Road Reforestation • Mystic Valley Estates • Nipher Middle School • North City Neighborhoods • North County Neighborhoods • North

Park • North Riverfront Park • North STL City Neighborhoods • Old North Saint Louis Restoration Group • Old Woodsmill Manor • Olivette in Bloom - Warson Park • Olivette Parks and Recreation - Warson Park • **Open Space Council** • Oran Rental Housing, Inc. • Orchard Farm School District • Parkway Early Childhood Center • Parkway North High School • Parkway School District • Pheasant Run Subdivision • Platte County Parks & Recreation • Premier Charter School • Presbyterian Church of Washington Cemetery • Preston Woods • Princeton Heights • Queen Anne Village • Rachel's Healing Garden - Resurrection Cemetery • Respect Life Apostolate - Archdiocese of St. Louis • Rockwoods Reservation • Rotary Club St Joseph South Side • Route 66 State Park • Ruth Porter Mall • St. Louis County Department of Parks & Recreation • Salem Lutheran Church • Savannah Subdivision - St. Peters • Scotland County R-1 School • Scott Farms • Scott Joplin House • Sedalia Parks and Recreation • Seven Pines Neighborhood Home Improvement • Shoal Creek Watershed Consortium • South Round Top Neighborhood Association • South Side Farms • Southridge neighborhood - Joplin • Spanish Lake Redevelopment • Springfield Public Schools - Jeffries Elementary • Springfield-Greene County Park Board • Springtree Subdivision • St. Louis Language Immersion School • St. Charles County Parks • St. Louis Aquarium Foundation • South City Catholic Academy • St. Louis County Parks • **St. Louis Zoo** • St. Marcus Cemetery • St. Margaret of Scotland School • STL Community College - Meramec • McDonnell Park • Stonecrest Place • Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic Parish • The Fit and Food Connection • **The Green Center** • Tilles Park • Tower Grove East • Town of Grantwood Village • TreeHouse Wildlife Center • **Truman State University** • U. City in Bloom • Ujima • UMKC Volker Campus • United Hebrew Congregation • University of Missouri - St. Louis • Cahokia Urban Farm • Urban Harvest STL • USDA Forest Service - Watercross Recreation Area • Valle Lake Events Committee • Vandeventer Community Garden • Wags & Whiskers Animal Shelter • Wallace State Park • Washington Park Library • Webster Groves Historical Society • Webster Groves Women's Garden Association • Wentzville Community Club • Westbury Manor • Westport Crossing • WildOnes St. Charles Chapter • Willmore Park • Winterset Community Association • Womyn for Peace • WoodsidePlat 19 • **World Bird Sanctuary** • Wright City Park • Yeatman Square Park

A Vision for the City Tree Farm



In partnership with Missouri State Parks and the Missouri Department of Conservation, Forest ReLeaf is planning to grow 3,000 more trees at a new City Tree Farm adjacent to the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site in midtown St. Louis. The City Tree Farm will bring trees closer to the places and the people that need them, inspire advocacy for trees, and elevate the message that a strategic, resilient tree canopy must be part of any city's future.

Forest ReLeaf of Missouri
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Help Us Grow!

Thank you for considering a donation to Forest ReLeaf.

