

**Final Grant Report: Title VIII, “Healthy Urban Forests for Everyone”  
Grant FY05-058K244-01-04**

Our program was very successful in utilizing the Title VIII grant funding to develop a wide variety of programs, projects, and partnerships to provide urban forestry benefits and services to low-income and underrepresented citizens of Olympia. Project goals were met to identify and overcome obstacles to providing urban forestry services, develop sustainable programs to ensure continued service, and create models of programs and projects that can be duplicated by other communities.

This grant gave our team the valuable opportunity to specifically focus on those members of our community who can most benefit from trees, but are least likely to have the leisure time or income to plant and maintain healthy trees, or remove hazardous trees. We feel fortunate to have received from the USDA Forest Service and DNR the resources to give a free food source, peace of mind, or a greater appreciation for the urban forest to these community members. Those small gifts and realizations will resonate, making a difference for individuals, families, and an entire community.

This report contains descriptions and pictures of each project developed with funding from this grant, including obstacles identified, processes used, partnerships developed, and accomplishments.

## **A) Fruit Trees**

Low-income and underserved community members rarely voluntarily participate in the Neighborwoods program, which provides free trees for Olympia residents to plant in city rights-of-ways. Our theory was that these community members do not have the leisure time or ability to pursue trees for a purely aesthetic purpose. In conversations with Garden Raised Bounty (GRuB), a local non-profit that provides gardens as food sources for low-income community members, we realized the need existed for trees that were “functional;” trees that provided food.

Urban Forestry viewed this as an opportunity to partner with GRuB, Raintree Nursery owner Sam Benowitz (Morton, WA), and Capital High School horticulture instructor Kathy Watts to graft apple and pear trees. Root stock and scion wood was either donated or purchased from Raintree Nursery for this educational opportunity, and Benowitz donated his time to instruct 25 students in Watt’s high school horticulture class how to graft. The students learned remarkably quick!

Over 200 successfully grafted fruit trees are currently being kept in the city tree nursery until they are ready to be distributed to low-income and underrepresented Olympia residents through the City of Olympia Housing Program or the GRuB Kitchen Garden Project.

To better understand the outcome of their hard work, the students toured the GRuB Sister Holly Garden to learn how this local non-profit operates and the populations they serve. Watts, Benowitz, and GRuB are all interested in continuing this successful partnership. In addition, Raintree Nursery donated over 40 bare root fruit trees to Urban Forestry, approximately half of which were distributed to low-income families in June. This program will continue, because Raintree Nursery will donate fruit trees annually until the students’ grafted trees are ready to be distributed.



Students in Kathy Watts’ horticulture class learn to graft fruit trees from Raintree Nursery owner Sam Benowitz.

**B) South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity**

The obstacles for South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity (SPSHH) predominantly exist from a lack of funding. As a non-profit organization reliant on donations and volunteers, SPSHH has very little funding to dedicate to urban forestry consulting, landscape design, or trees for their projects. However, in constructing livable and code-compliant homes, SPSHH is not exempt from meeting all city planning and permitting requirements.

Certified Arborist Kevin McFarland (Sound Urban Forestry) completed a site evaluation and provided guidance on appropriate preservation techniques to use during the construction phase.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, we were unable to complete as many projects with SPSHH as initially forecasted. SPSHH and the Fairview Cottages development fell extremely behind schedule. It was initially hoped that SPSHH would obtain all construction permits, clear the site, and construct the three homes by December 31; however, none of these goals were accomplished.

Our program intends to continue work with SPSHH in 2006. We plan to provide donated fruit trees from Raintree Nursery for residents and street trees from the Neighborwoods program. We will also host planting and pruning workshops with the new residents.



Urban forestry consultant, Kevin McFarland, has worked closely with SPSHH to plan for saving a large percentage of the trees on the Fairview Cottages site.

### **C) Landscape Assessments**

Many low-income and underserved community members don't have access to information regarding the condition or species of the trees on their own property, or surrounding the home where they live. The obstacles vary from unaffordable tree services to ignorance of a property manager. Urban forestry consultant Kevin McFarland, Sound Urban Forestry, was hired to conduct landscape assessments and tree appraisals for low-income and underrepresented Olympia residents. Both homeowners and renters were identified through the City of Olympia Housing Program and the Garden Raised Bounty (GRuB) Kitchen Garden Project.

The landscape assessments were effective outreach and educational tools to demonstrate for low-income and underrepresented residents and other community members the importance of having safe and healthy trees. Appraisals were completed for low-income and underserved homeowners who had a hazardous tree on their property that either required immediate removal or was the potential result of a negligent contractor.

McFarland evaluated each site for tree condition, maintenance needs, and planting opportunities. The assessments provided a much-needed snapshot of the hazards and tree maintenance issues that exist for low-income residents and locations for potential Neighborwoods trees. All participants received a user-friendly summary which described the results of their landscape assessment. In addition to receiving their assessments, homeowners were listed as project sites for the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Volunteer Tree Care Day (see below). Renters received a targeted packet of information to give to their property manager.

### **D) Volunteer Tree Care Day**

One of the most common obstacles for low-income and underserved community members to achieving high quality, safe trees in their landscape is cost. Urban forestry consultations and tree services can be very expensive, depending on the degree of difficulty of the project. Landscape assessment results (see above) were compiled and bid specs developed by urban forestry consultant Kevin McFarland, Sound Urban Forestry, for five low-income and underserved homeowners. Eleven local arborists from three different private tree care companies donated time and services to complete the tree removal and pruning recommendations for each homeowner at no cost.

All projects were completed on Saturday, May 21, 2005. Volunteer arborists and homeowners receiving tree services were invited for a pizza lunch and barbecue dinner at Priest Point Park. This event gave homeowners the opportunity to meet and thank all of the tree care volunteers. Additionally, all participating arborists were offered educational credits and/or certification study materials in exchange for their time, however, no tree services elected to take advantage of the offer.

# Keep on Prunin’..



“Keep on Prunin’” was the theme of the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Volunteer Tree Care Day. The t-shirts provided for arborists and tree care recipients proved to be extremely popular!



Volunteer arborist Michael Moore of Moore Trees & Co. was one of 11 arborists who participated in the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Volunteer Tree Care Day.

### **E) Downtown Tree Planting**

Over the past few years, tree grates downtown have been left empty as street trees have succumbed to vandalism, construction injuries, or lousy drivers. Downtown Olympia residents are primarily low-income, so our program goal was to conduct a downtown street tree inventory, purchase replacement street trees, and plant them as a volunteer-based activity.

On October 1, 2005, an incredible 16 trees were planted by over 75 enthusiastic volunteers through an inaugural partnership with the Olympia Downtown Association (ODA). The trees were planted as part of the ODA-hosted annual Downtown Clean-Up.

Urban forestry consultant Kevin McFarland, Sound Urban Forestry, conducted the downtown street tree inventory, Neighborwoods trained volunteers led the clean-up participants in planting the trees, and tree pit and grate preparation was provided by City of Olympia Parks and Streets staff. Parks Department and Urban Forestry employees oversaw the plantings and delivered extra soil where needed.

Anecdotal response from volunteers, city officials, and community members was extremely positive, and multiple requests were received for a similar activity to be held next year. If funding is available, we hope to identify more locations downtown for additional street tree installations.



Over 75 enthusiastic volunteers helped plant 16 replacement street trees in empty grates downtown. A large percentage of Olympia’s low-income residents live in the downtown core.

**F) Hazard Tree Removals/Firewood Distribution**

Urban Forestry partnered with four local private tree care services and the Community Action Council, Home Energy Assistance Program of Thurston County to remove hazard trees for low-income and underserved neighborhoods and distribute recycled wood as firewood for low-income and underserved community members.

A private tree service was hired specifically to remove over 30 hazardous trees from low-income and underserved neighborhoods. After 20 cords of firewood was delivered to the city tree nursery from all citywide hazard tree removals, a private contractor was hired to split and deliver the wood to eight low-income families in Olympia. Low-income and underserved families in Olympia were identified through the Thurston County Community Action Council, Home Energy Assistance Program. Additional firewood is being stored by the Community Action Council to meet future needs of Olympia residents.



Devoe Street was one of the sites where hazard trees were removed and converted to firewood for low-income and underserved community members. Over 20 cords of firewood were collected from the removals.