

Tree Stewards Help Re-green the “Forest City” of Cleveland, Ohio

The Challenge:

Once called “The Forest City,” the city of Cleveland, OH, is facing a steady decline in canopy cover. According to Sustainable Cleveland’s Community Tree Plan, an estimated 97 acres of tree canopy is lost each year. Without immediate changes, Cleveland’s canopy is projected to fall to 14 percent of current acreage by 2040.

The Solution:

Sustainable Cleveland’s Community Tree Plan is a community-wide collaboration to rebuild the urban forest through partnerships. In support of this plan, the [Western Reserve Land Conservancy](#) (WRLC) and Davey Resource Group, Inc., launched the Reforest Our City program. The program works with partners to plant and care for trees along streets, in parks, and in other public spaces throughout the city.

With USDA Forest Service support, WRLC was able to hire a four-member crew from the [Student Conservation Association](#) (SCA). The SCA crew was composed of recent college graduates interested in pursuing careers in natural resources. The experience provided opportunities for crew members to develop natural resource expertise and leadership skills while giving back to their community. It was also an important first step in exploring pathways to green careers using their college degrees from fields not normally associated with the green industry.

Resulting Benefits:

The WRLC hired one of the SCA students at the end of the project. SCA crew accomplishments include these initiatives:

- Helped implement an i-Tree Canopy Cover Suitability Analysis that identified high-priority tree planting needs in areas of the city where the tree canopy was very low.
- Attended a tree steward program at Holden Arboretum and Gardens and became Ohio Certified Tree Stewards.



David Clark, Zaija Pelligree, Nathan Herr, and Echo Davis were inspired by their experience with Reforest Our City to pursue new opportunities in environmental fields. (Courtesy photo by Western Reserve Land Conservancy)

- Planted 540 trees and cared for more than 1,000 trees planted through the WRLC Reforest Our City program.
- Honed their leadership skills by conducting environmental education training at eight different events throughout the city.

Sharing Success:

SCA crew members reached out to the community through these efforts:

- Engaged neighbors, block clubs, church groups, community development businesses, and others in tree planting and maintenance.
- Shared important tree care and planting information within their communities.
- Assisted with training and managing volunteers.
- Conducted eight community outreach programs that informed city residents about the environmental impact of trees and energized participants to volunteer and plant trees.

Federal Award: 17-DG-11420004-005

Caring for trees and teaching others about trees and their benefits was a first step in exploring green careers for students with unrelated college degrees.



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