

working with
communities to
plant trees and
improve parks for a
healthy, resilient
future
since 1969

NEWS FROM THE PARK PEOPLE

THE PARK BENCH

A Hot But Hopeful Future

We are feeling the impacts of our changing climate. We've watched footage of the floods back East. We've breathed the smoke from the wildfires in the West. We've read of the devastating impacts of the extreme heat in the Pacific-Northwest. And we've felt the heat ourselves.

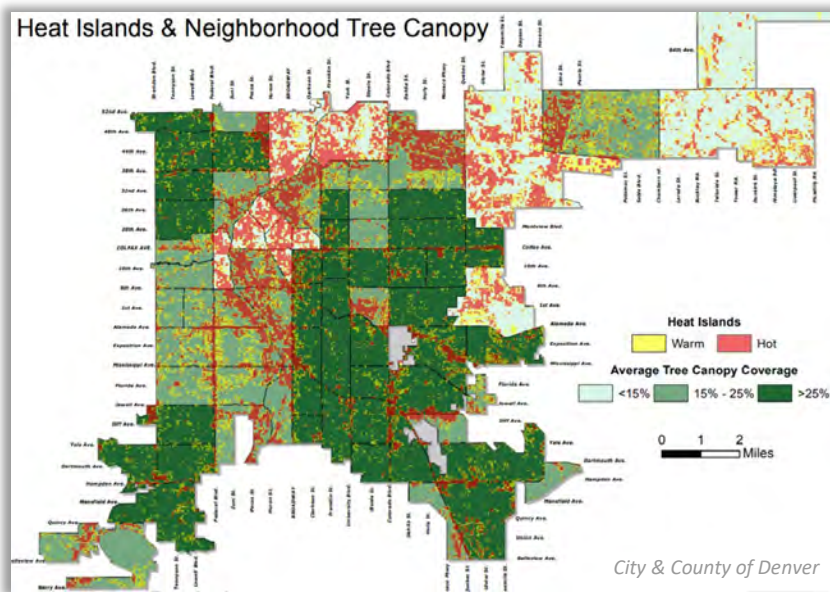
Our summers are becoming hotter, with Denver projected to experience thirty-five 95°F⁺ days each year by 2040 – up from five per year in 1970-1999. Extreme heat is not only uncomfortable, but poses a real danger to the health of vulnerable members of our communities, including older adults and people with chronic disease. Urban heat is particularly dangerous for those who live in neighborhoods with a lot of heat-absorbing paved surfaces, with little shade cover, and without access to air conditioning.

But we Park People have reason to hope. Trees have a critical role to play in moderating urban heat and protecting our communities. Trees and vegetation lower surface and air temperatures by providing shade and releasing water through leaves via processes of transpiration and evaporation. Shaded surfaces can be 20-45°F cooler than unshaded surfaces, and evapotranspiration can help reduce peak summer temperatures by 2-9°F.¹ These are dramatic, life-saving differences. We can work to strategically plant and care for trees throughout our city and in Denver's lowest canopy neighborhoods where heat poses the greatest danger.

Of course, this is not news to us. Planting and caring for Denver's forest and creating tree equity (ensuring that *everyone* has access to the important benefits of trees) have been core to our mission for decades. We are proud to support all Denverites in their forestry efforts, and we concentrate our work in 28 focus neighborhoods where trees are needed most.

We are inspired by the growing awareness and energy around this work. This year, we engaged with a record number of organizations seeking to help plant and care for Denver's forest. New players are bringing energy and resources to join our cause, greening Denver for a healthy, resilient future. More and more individuals, community groups, and businesses are realizing the important role trees and greenspaces play in

Cont'd on page 3



A Message from the Director

Dear Friends,

I hope that you and your loved ones have been able to stay healthy and safe while returning to some aspects of normalcy over the past year.

We had a full and busy year, running a rich calendar of programming. The challenges of adapting our programs to the ongoing pandemic have been well worth it. What a joy to host *Denver Digs Trees* during the spring, to plant trees and tend parks together again, and to train a new cohort of Community Foresters.

Amidst this very full year executing on our mission, we have been navigating significant transitions and growth. In recognition of the critical need to scale up our work, we are investing in capacity and in programming that will enable us to do more in the face of growing community needs.

In January, we brought on **Jemmy Barrera** in the new position of Volunteer Coordinator for The Park People. Volunteers truly fuel our work, so this was a long-awaited step our staff dreamt of for years. In October, we hired a Development Manager, a critical role that will build our capacity to expand the depth and reach of our work. We are excited to have **Hayley Kwasniewski** join our team in this position. In connection with the important new program we are creating (page 3), we hired **Madeleine Hooker** as our new Urban Forestry Workforce Development Program Manager. Last November, we also transitioned leadership of our programs to **Lindsay Cutler**. Lindsay immediately embraced her new role as our Program Manager, executing her work with creative leadership and rich experience, enabling us to pivot, adapt, and grow our programming during a challenging time. Our deep gratitude to **Leah Jean Shafer** for her phenomenal leadership of and tireless commitment to our urban forestry programs for 6+ outstanding years. Leah is now busy running a small business, and we are fortunate for her continued participation on our Urban Forestry Committee. **Morgan Wolfe**, our superb new Program Associate, worked closely with Lindsay to navigate our new custom tree software and adapted to a delivery-based spring tree distribution, while also increasing our capacity to pursue more partnership projects this autumn.

I am deeply grateful for the dedication and flexibility of our staff and volunteers who support all aspects of our work. It is their resilience and the support of our community that enabled us to adapt and grow during this time and that will continue to propel us forward.



Please join us in our work engaging communities in planting and stewarding trees and improving parks and greenspaces for a healthy, resilient future.

Please consider making a donation to The Park People. **Each contribution will be doubled by an anonymous donor matching gifts, dollar-for-dollar, up to \$30,000!**

We welcome gifts made via www.TheParkPeople.org, by mail, and over the phone. We value gifts of all sizes; each gift makes an impact. You may further maximize the value of your contribution through the Colorado Gives Day incentive fund by scheduling your online gift for December 7th www.ColoradoGives.org/TheParkPeople.

Thank you for your support and partnership in creating a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable Denver.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Yuan-Farrell'.

Kim Yuan-Farrell
Executive Director

ANNOUNCING: A New Program for Good Green Jobs

Growing the future of tree care in Denver

We are excited to announce an exciting new development at The Park People: an urban forestry workforce development program.

Urban forests are gaining widespread recognition as critical components of green infrastructure that support healthy, livable cities and essential tools in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

However, like many cities across the U.S., Denver lacks enough trained people to care for our urban forest. The need for tree care work is growing, and the tree care sector offers significant opportunities for good, well-paying jobs and real career paths. But companies of varying sizes struggle to hire and retain enough skilled, dependable workers to keep up with their workloads. Addressing this labor shortage is critical to the viability of our city forest and the health of our communities into the future.

The Park People's work will help close the gap between the tree care sector and under-employed people who could find meaningful employment in the field. Thanks to a generous planning and development grant from the *Zofnass Family*, we are creating a new Urban Forestry Pre-Apprenticeship Program. Through a combination of classroom instruction, work-based learning, and career exploration, this program will recruit and prepare individuals facing barriers to employment for positions in the growing field of urban forestry. Along with strong partners, we will ensure that our trainees gain necessary tools for success in work. Following their participation in our eight-week pre-apprenticeship program, trainees will have the option to go directly into tree care jobs or enroll in a quality apprenticeship program. This program will increase the capacity for The Park People, as well as the greater community, to support a healthy, resilient urban forest and communities, while also supporting the success of individuals in need of family-supporting, meaningful career pathways. Our deep gratitude to the *Zofnass Family* for giving us the capacity during our Phase I: Planning and Development process to ensure that we structure this important endeavor with care. We are currently seeking community support for Phase II: Implementation of this wonderful project.

To learn more about the program, visit www.TheParkPeople.org or contact Madeleine@TheParkPeople.org.

To support this important new program through a gift, grant, or sponsorship, please contact Hayley@TheParkPeople.org.



A Hot But Hopeful Future *cont'd from page 1*

moderating our urban temperatures. More are looking to help plant and steward trees throughout our city and in high-need areas. We are excited to partner with these fellow tree-huggers and park-lovers to grow our community and our capacity to get more done – more trees planted, more trees stewarded, more open spaces tended.

We are action-oriented. We are also strategic.

This year, our staff engaged in rich dialogues with a variety of metro area organizations on how to scale up and maintain our urban forests and how to support tree equity to protect our most vulnerable communities. These dialogues have been inspiring opportunities to shape strategy and seed partnerships, and they resulted in the “[Colorado Front Range Urban Forestry Expansion Strategy](#)” report. We have been excited to bring decades of knowledge and experience in urban and community forestry to share and to learn from and collaborate with great current and future partners with whom we can work to magnify our efforts. Partnership has always been key to our work. This year's many dialogues will help take our partnerships to the next level.



Robinson Park Playground Opening

Last fall The Park People teamed up with a group of passionate residents to raise funds to support the City's redesign of Robinson Park Playground. Together, we raised over \$65,000 – more than our original goal. The funds ensured the full realization of the design, supporting the health and development of Denver children. After months of construction, the playground is now complete!

The park's playground and basketball court were replaced, landscaping and picnic facilities improved, and overall accessibility upgraded. Thanks to many generous donors in the community, our fundraising campaign filled a gap in funding and ensured that these six elements were included:

- Shade Sails
- Sand Play Area
- Musical Instrument Play Features
- Embankment Slide
- Friendship Swing
- SmartPlay Cube

These features add fun and function, increasing the usability of the playground and expanding the range of ages and uses that the park serves. We are excited to see Denver's children enjoy the rich, engaging experience that the new playground will provide. Denver children will play, learn, and grow strong at the revitalized playground for years to come!



At the ribbon cutting on Halloween, children noted their favorite elements of the new playground.

Outdoor play is key to early childhood development. Playgrounds in our parks help children develop creativity, curiosity, confidence, and social skills like cooperation and leadership. They also provide important avenues for physical exercise and help our children burn off all that energy!

WARM THANKS to Robinson Park Playground Committee Members Denise Sanderson, Brewster Boyd, Lauren Deaton, Meredith Levy, Erin Osovets, Jamie Resnik, and Myra Skinner. We are grateful for the Elevate Denver Bond, the Denver Parks and Recreation Legacy Fund, Telluride Stone, LuBird's Light Foundation, Councilwoman Amanda Sawyer, the Cranmer Park/Hilltop Civic Association, and the many individuals and families who enabled this project to reach its fullest potential. Full list of Robinson Park Playground donors published at www.TheParkPeople.org.



Denver Digs Trees 2021: A Pandemic Pivot



In April, The Park People's beloved *Denver Digs Trees* program successfully distributed 500 trees to hundreds of households, despite an ongoing pandemic, unpredictable spring weather, and supply chain disruptions. Our new programs team stepped up to the challenge of adapting the program for a pandemic-safe event, pivoting to a delivery mode of distribution to avoid crowds congregating at our distribution sites. Over the course of four days, these hardy, urban tolerant trees were personally delivered to their forever homes safely, adding over \$500,000 of community benefits to our growing city. Our warm thanks to the volunteers and partner organizations who rallied to drive vehicles and wrangle and plant trees for residents. A special thanks to our program sponsors who made this possible.

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS & PARTNERS:



WITH SUPPORT ALSO FROM ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION, UPS, AT&T, CROW HOLDINGS, DENVER WATER, AND OZ ARCHITECTURE

THE NUMBERS



500 TREES

7 hardy, urban-tolerant species



Delivered to
850+ RESIDENTS
at 374 homes



With the help of
188 VOLUNTEERS



14 CREWS
planting trees for
residents with
physical limitations



COVID MEASURES
no-contact delivery,
masks & social distance,
infusion of joy & hope

TOTAL COMMUNITY BENEFITS: \$523,260



3,366,000 lbs
GH gas offset



\$89,420
Energy Savings



24,820 lbs
Removed Air Pollutants



20,553,000 gal
Water Stored



\$259,760
Aesthetic Benefits

Learn more about and
support this important
community program at
www.TheParkPeople.org



Building a Resilient Future, Together: Partnership for the High Line Canal



Strong partnerships are key to elevating the mission of The Park People and to supporting the good work of other organizations. In early 2021, as part of the High Line Canal Conservancy's (HLCC's) commitment to steward the canal's transition from irrigation ditch to green infrastructure, they approached The Park People for training and guidance on tree planting and volunteer leadership. Kim and Lindsay developed and taught a custom Crew Leader Training Program for canal volunteers in August, growing the capacity of HLCC and its volunteers to care for the canal. The absence of regular water has severely impacted the health of the more than 50,000 riparian trees that line the canal's banks; Denver's trend towards a hotter and drier climate threatens their survival further. Tree species were selected for drought tolerance and hardiness. This fall, Morgan and longtime volunteer Community Forester John DeRungs led HLCC crews in the field, ensuring 75 new trees were given the best possible start in their new homes. The Park People and HLCC plan to continue our work together in 2022, stewarding the future of the Front Range, in partnership. To learn more about partnering with The Park People, contact Kim@TheParkPeople.org.

Remembering Hal

This summer we lost a beloved, deeply committed member of our volunteer community: Harold "Hal" Taylor. Hal planted trees with The Park People for roughly 15 years. A landscaper, Hal put his big personality, his white pick-up truck, and his agile skills with a trenching shovel to use, leading our volunteer crews that deliver and plant trees for our *Denver Digs Trees* program participants with physical limitations. When we started our *Mile High Tree Champions* program in 2010, Hal became one of our most frequent crew leaders, guiding the employee-volunteers from our corporate partners through the planting process. He grew his volunteerism over the years to canvass low-canopy neighborhoods, conduct street tree planting site inspections, and steward parks during Park Workdays.

Hal didn't use a cell phone or an email address, but he was one of our staff's dependable, go-to people who we could count on to show up early, look for what needed to be done, and "get on it like a bad shirt," as Hal would say. Hal brought heart. We have a long list of "Hal-isms" that he would say, instantly infusing spunk, joy, laughter, and energy into the work. Hal was lively, generous, and good to the core. And he had big goals: Hal wanted to plant 1,000 trees in his lifetime. And he was well on his way. Our staff dedicated this fall planting season to this amazing force of nature. We miss you dearly, Hal, but we'll keep planting for you, and we'll picture you "swinging from the chandeliers" with each tree we get into the ground.





2021 Mile High Tree Champions: Teambuilding through tree planting

After a necessarily limited 2020 planting season, 2021 was one of our strongest years yet for partnerships with corporate groups looking to engage teams of employees and community members in planting trees. We held seven planting events for these newest partners.

2021 Mile High Tree Champions

State Farm & Arbor Day Foundation
Sloan's Lake Park

Philadelphia Insurance & Arbor Day Foundation
Washington Park

UPS & Arbor Day Foundation
Columbine Homes

Ball Aerospace
Berkeley Lake Park

BBG Law Group & Flatiron
City Park

Crow Holdings & Arbor Day Foundation
Columbine Homes

BBG Law Group & PCL Construction
Sloan's Lake Park

These projects added 200 new trees in Denver parks as well as at an affordable housing community in a neighborhood with low tree canopy cover. These trees will beautify and shade their immediate surroundings and will also grow to help cool the broader neighborhood, improve air quality, absorb carbon, and help reduce flooding during storms. Our warm thanks to all these wonderful champions, to our veteran volunteer crew leaders and community tree planters, and to this year's planting site partners at Denver Parks and Recreation and Denver Housing Authority.

Become a Mile High Tree Champion! Our *Mile High Tree Champions* program engages companies in supporting our urban forest by sponsoring and staffing planting projects. These projects offer a turnkey team-building activity and an opportunity to make a tangible impact. Any excess sponsorship dollars support the costs of trees we plant throughout the city. Have a suggestion for a prospective partner company? Or a potential planting site? Please contact Mike@TheParkPeople.org



Profile of a Long-time Trustee: Bill Cook

By Caroline Rassenfoss, Board Trustee



Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

Colorado has always been home. After graduating from East High School, I attended Stanford University and graduated in 1960 with an Architecture degree before I joined my grandfather, Howard Lorton, in running the family furniture business. In 1967 I met my wife Nancy at a DU hockey game and married her six months later. We have two children: a daughter and a son. Our son Will is now President of Howard Lorton, and now I work for him.

How /why did you get involved with The Park People?

A furniture representative and friend was involved with The Park People and asked me to get involved in 1984. It was one of the opportunities I had to contribute to Denver's parks and trees. I live a bit south of Denver. However, our family business started on Speer Boulevard, and we love Denver for its trees, boulevards and parks.

How long have you been a trustee/volunteer for The Park People?

I have been a trustee at The Park People for 37 years.

What has been one of your favorite projects or programs to date?

One of the first projects I was involved with was the renovation of Civic Center Park in the heart of Denver. It was a big project. Another wonderful program The Park People does is *Denver Digs Trees*. Each year I enjoy picking up lunches or coffee for our countless volunteers who help distribute trees. I think over the years we have seen over 60,000 trees planted.

What are your top three favorite parks in Denver?

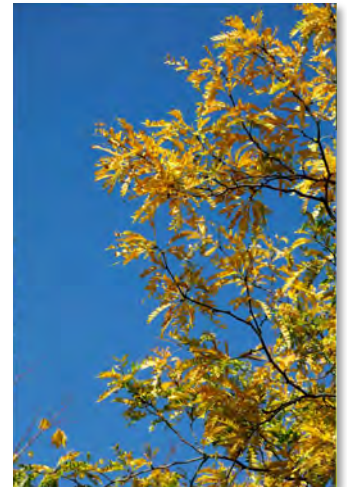
I love City Park because I attended East High and used to head across the street after school to play golf. I love golf to this day. Also, the Esplanade at City Park is one of my favorite park spaces. City of Potenza Park is another favorite because I remember when it was a raw piece of land and communities came together to make it a wonderful park. It is located at Holly Street and Cherry Creek Drive South. Gates Tennis Center is another great spot for the community to come together to enjoy the sport of tennis. It is a wonderful facility in Pulaski Park.

If you could be a tree which one would you choose? And why?

I would be a Honeylocust Tree because they are beautiful trees that grow well in this climate.

Why do you continue to support The Park People?

Because it's more exciting now than ever. We are involved all over the city with meaningful programs. I believe the future of The Park People is great, and the potential for creating an organization that could be replicated in other cities is there.



Park People Board Transitions

We are delighted to welcome four new Board Trustees to our leadership team: **Sue Fry**, **Bonnie Gross**, **Dustin Hull**, and **Brian LaCarrubba**. Our warm thanks to outgoing Trustee **Wolfe Repass** for four years of dedicated service.

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