

The Faces of Urban Forestry



Paula Gillespie
Food company quality analyst



Trees Help Save a Home and Heal a Neighborhood

Paula Gillespie shed a few tears during the spring of 2007 when the old shade trees in her yard were shredded by a vicious tornado. But those turned into tears of joy when volunteers from the nonprofit Branching Out knocked on her door and offered free trees as replacements.

"I started bawling, knowing others cared and shared my feeling that trees are important," Paula says.

Paula also credits the trees she had prior to the tornado for forming a barrier that prevented the wind from destroying her house. Others homes nearby were demolished, while hers lost only its roof. "I think the trees saved my house," she says.

The new trees have begun to restore shade and wind breaks during the summer. They have also restored a family tradition of raking leaves and playing outdoors. "It felt like a barren desert. But we were excited when the trees started going back in," Paula says. "This is so important. Kids need this."

Branching Out, with grants from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Muscatine Power & Water, planted more than 1,000 trees in the aftermath of the tornado, helping to heal neighborhoods like Paula's as they recover.

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— Paula Gillespie



In the wake of devastating tornado damage, urban forestry professionals in Muscatine helped plant new trees.

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A joint project of U.S. Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry, the National Association of State Foresters, and the Arbor Day Foundation. For more information visit arborday.org/faces