

# The Faces of Urban Forestry



**Mary Lou Hildreth**  
Mayor



Keystone Heights,  
Florida

## Grant Leads to Improved Tree Quality and Public Safety

Mayor Mary Lou Hildreth knows that trees are both a “quality of life issue” for her community and a matter of public safety. She also knows about the challenges small towns like hers face in trying to care for their trees, especially older ones. That’s why her story of leveraging grant funds with local resources is a model for other small communities.

For example, Mayor Hildreth applied for a U.S. Forest Service grant through the Florida Forestry Service to buy a bucket truck for pruning the city’s beautiful but aging oak trees. With the grant money, she also found a truck at a price that allowed her to use the savings to contract a complete street tree inventory and to plant trees in the downtown corridor.

“Being a small community, with a small budget and limited resources, something like a bucket truck and being able to do an inventory was big,” said the mayor. The projects funded by the original grant enabled the city to receive funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. This additional money was used for removing dangerous limbs and trees from city rights-of-way that threatened public safety.

“It all had a huge impact,” the mayor reflects. “We may not have the capacity to do a lot of the bigger things, but we’ve learned to do a lot with a little.”

“My mantra is that when it comes to trees in our community, they are every bit as much of our infrastructure as our roads.”

— Mary Lou Hildreth



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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](http://arborday.org/faces)