The Long Wharf Nature Preserve, located at the west end of Long Wharf Drive, is one of New Haven’s outdoor treasures. Encompassing five different habitats (beach, salt marsh, mudflat, woodland, and wildflower field), each with its distinctive plants and animals, this man-made 15-acre site is easily accessible to residents.

Originally destined for industrial development, the Garden Club of New Haven and the New Haven Land Trust persuaded the city to transfer the parcel, which it did in 1994, so that the Land Trust could protect it as a nature preserve. The Preserve was created from material dredged from New Haven Harbor and has become home to many pioneer species, including non-native plants like the Tree of Heaven, Oriental Bittersweet, Russian Olive, and Multiflora Rose. Many of these non-natives are invasive, rapidly covering large areas while offering little benefit to native birds, butterflies, small mammals, and other fauna. Removal of these invasives is important to create a balanced, sustainable ecosystem.

With funding from Jordan’s Furniture and support from the New Haven Land Trust, URI has undertaken a major initiative to restore the habitats by planting 100 native trees. Over fifteen different species have been chosen to provide food for birds, winter cover for non-migrating birds, and food for pollinators, like bees. At the same time, for visitors along the trails, these trees will buffer the visual and noise impact of the adjacent interstate highway and improve the sense of being surrounded by nature despite the urban setting.

(continued on page 3)
As URI plans to celebrate the 20th year of our Community Greenspace program, we have been reflecting on the many neighborhood projects completed over two decades. We have been making note of our achievements as of this milestone. Over 270 community groups have worked to make positive change in their neighborhoods.

Numbers are often the currency of success—thousands of volunteers and tens of thousands of volunteer hours invested in cleaning up parks, streetscapes, and vacant lots; some thousands of trees planted. Recognizing these achievements does matter. But any volunteer will tell you that a number is leavened by its story. One tree represents where concrete was cut and pulled to make the planting possible. Another tree stands where neighbors, together, planted a tree in somebody’s honor.

And numbers cannot capture how these stories unfold through time. Our Yale interns gain valuable learning experiences that they carry forward. Since we began in 1995, 140 Yale students have worked as interns in the Greenspace program. Now Carla Short leads all public tree planting for the City of San Francisco, Yi-Wen Lin and Sumana Serchan plant at NYC Parks, and Jim Woodworth leads tree planting for Casey Trees in Washington, D.C.

Sometimes the effects are less specific. In mid-September, Chris Ozyck, Anna Pickett, and I were working with a group of Americorps volunteers (described in the article by John Cox), when I was surprised to see Joe Montgomery, who had been an intern in 1999–2000. (Like many interns he opted to return for a second summer). Now an accomplished artist in New York City, Joe’s internship experience clearly did not affect his profession, but he returned to New Haven to give back to the community by volunteering.

I know this effect extends to volunteers as well, who often fondly recall the interns that they spent a summer with. Not long ago, Jeannette Thomas called asking for Georgia Silvera’s updated address so that she could send her a gift for her new baby. Georgia had been an intern back in 2000 when Jeannette first began to transform the Ivy/Dixwell lot with her neighbors. Fourteen years later, Georgia and Jeannette have stayed connected.

These connections represent the final success of our work: the civic responsibility shouldered willingly, the empowerment of citizens as they identify problems deemed important and follow through with action to fix what needs fixing. I look forward to the next twenty years.

Colleen Murphy-Dunning
Initiating the effort on September 13th, URI staff led 25 volunteers from AmeriCorps to help clear the site for planting. The group started by cutting down invasive woody plants. To everybody’s surprise, Joe Montgomery, an intern from 1999, arrived on the scene from New York City to help out. After the felling, Chris Ozyck used heavy equipment and the assistance of more volunteers to remove the stumps and ground them into mulch, which is now being used in the planting of native trees.

The tree planting began on September 27th with 18 high school student interns from Common Ground and Sound School led by Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies graduate students. To complete the ambitious effort, their work will continue every Saturday throughout the fall.

“There really is no better way to spend your Saturday than getting outside and helping to protect the environment,” said James Stephenson, a second-year student at F&ES who is leading the crew,” said James Stephenson, a second-year student at F&ES who is leading the crew.

“This project is the first time that all 18 GreenSkills students have worked together on a single site. Typically, GreenSkills sends three separate teams of six high school and two Yale graduate students into different neighborhoods around New Haven. The large-scale approach at Long Wharf broadens the opportunities for the students to learn from and interact with a diverse group of people.

For many of the GreenSkills students, this is their second or third year working with URI, “which means they came with plenty of tree-planting experience,” said Gabriela Baeza-Castaneda, a graduate student at F&ES. She noted how her six team members have not only worked with URI, “which means they came with plenty of tree-planting experience,” said James Stephenson, a second-year student at F&ES who is leading the crew, but besides the pay—everybody acknowledged the pay as a useful incentive—“it’s good experience to be out here,” he said. “It’s good for the environment and you get to spend time with other high schoolers you wouldn’t otherwise meet.”

This project is the first time that all 18 GreenSkills students have worked together on a single site. Typically, GreenSkills sends three separate teams of six high school and two Yale graduate students into different neighborhoods around New Haven. The large-scale approach at Long Wharf broadens the opportunities for the students to learn from and interact with a diverse group of people.

For many of the GreenSkills students, this is their second or third year working with URI, “which means they came with plenty of tree-planting experience,” said Gabriela Baeza-Castaneda, a graduate student at F&ES. She noted how her six team members have not only worked with URI, “which means they came with plenty of tree-planting experience,” said James Stephenson, a second-year student at F&ES who is leading the crew, but besides the pay—everybody acknowledged the pay as a useful incentive—“it’s good experience to be out here,” he said. “It’s good for the environment and you get to spend time with other high schoolers you wouldn’t otherwise meet.”

Efforts to remove the log, rather than teach from it, were less fruitful. It didn’t budge. The group relocated the edge of its hole and eventually planted the hackberry.

Besides rocky soil, cold downpours have also made two of the first three weekends quite challenging. But the fourth Saturday proved a beautiful warm afternoon that allowed for the planting of fifteen trees—eastern red cedar, Virginia pine, and hackberry. “It’s been a really efficient crew,” said James Stephenson, a second-year student at F&ES who is leading the entire effort.

On that afternoon, students took great pleasure in the warmth. They were planting on a low bluff overlooking the harbor, the deep blue water flecked green in sun. The steady rasping of shovels as they cut into packed sand made clear the digging was smoother, though an occasional clang rang out from metal against rock. Two students wrestled a cedar into a pit, stood it up straight, and the crew of six all knelt down to refill and pat down the soil. Lingering before her crouch, one student stroked the needles. “I hope it’s going to be okay,” she said.

At 2:30, the teams took a break. They snacked and hung in clusters by the URI trucks, chatting and leaning against old concrete pipes or piles of dirt. One student called from the back of a pickup truck: “Get your water! Nice fresh water!” Another student, using a small stone, battered pebbles into nearby shrubs. They would remain on-site for one more hour, but the final tree was already being slipped into its spot. The students lightly packed a mulch donut around its base. They shuttled buckets of water. “It’s beautiful,” said a Sound Schooler as he stood and brushed his hands, looking over the work. “And it’s ours doing.”

As the project moves on, old invasive plants will continue to be replaced by new native ones. High school students will develop critical life skills—a strong work ethic, effective teamwork, and a clear idea of the importance of environmental stewardship. A natural resource will be enhanced for the benefit of people, plants, animals years down the road. This is URI at its best.

John Cox is a volunteer with both URI and the New Haven Land Trust.
A Tale of Two Tours

by Anna Ruth Pickett

The Community Greenspace program celebrated its twentieth season this year. The summer began with an inspiring visit to likeminded organizations in Brooklyn, New York. It closed with a celebratory bus tour of fourteen Greenspace sites in New Haven, Mayor Toni Harp along for the ride. The pair of tours was a fitting way to mark the twenty-year anniversary and to help the Greenspace program prepare for another twenty years of greening New Haven and exploring new ideas for making the city more livable.

On a Sunday morning in June, 50 Greenspacers hopped on a charter bus to Brooklyn. The first stop was the Gowanus Canal, the notoriously polluted industrial site listed by the Environmental Protection Agency as “one of the nation’s most extensively contaminated water bodies.” To Greenspacers’ surprise, there are signs of regeneration around the canal—a nursery, honey-bee hives, a composting system, and a bioswale beyond the scale of any seen in New Haven.

This first stop was the favorite for many, including URI Board President Nan Bartow, who said, “I was especially awed by our visit to the Gowanus Canal. Yes, it smelled foul! Yes, it looked dangerous to touch! But here was Hans Hesselein, Executive Director of the Gowanus Canal Conservancy, composting and creating fresh clean soil in which he grows native trees and bushes to plant along the canal. Here also was Whole Foods on the edge of the Gowanus selling healthy food to the neighborhood and contributing more compost…If there's hope for the polluted Gowanus, then there's hope for us all.”

From there, Greenspacers toured community gardens on Union Street and President Street in the Park Slope neighborhood. Daniel Rivera, a Greenspacer at Newhall and Division, said he appreciated seeing “how widespread community greening is, that other people do it in other cities.” Rivera was impressed by how much can be done in small spaces; one greenspace in Park Slope, for example, occupied the footprint of a former driveway. URI Board member and Lenzi Park Greenspacer Britton Rogers was thrilled “to see the stellar examples of long-sustained community gardens. I think many on the tour were inspired by those.”

After a lunch near the Grand Army Plaza at the northwest tip of Prospect Park, the group toured the nearby Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Thanks to URI board member Jody Bush’s outreach, the Botanical Gardens gave the group free admission. “Because of our own work this year toward establishing a meadow at Beaver Ponds Park as part of the Urban Oasis partnership, we were interested
in the Botanical Garden’s recently developed meadow, which was already thigh high with lush waving grasses and some colorful wildflowers," said Bill Bidwell, another URI Greenspacer from Friends of Beaver Ponds Park. “Both Nan Bartow and I were entranced by the Japanese Gardens and found it difficult to leave them, although we knew that many other amazing gardens beckoned us.”

"If there's hope for the polluted Gowanus, then there's hope for us all.”

Ten years prior, Greenspacers had visited the Bronx on a similar tour with the same purpose. Bartow explained, “The trip to Brooklyn was a terrific opportunity for all of us as New Haven Greenspacers to travel to a different state to experience innovative gardens and experimental programs that push us to think outside of our own smaller gardens at home. The trip also provided us with a way to meet other New Haven Greenspacers.”

Another great opportunity to mingle with fellow Greenspacers and get inspired by urban greening came at the end of the summer with the annual New Haven Community Greenspace bus tour. In August, two school busses departed City Hall to travel through fourteen greenspaces in Newhallville, Beaver Hills, Dwight, Dixwell, and Westville. The tour guides—community leaders, Yale community forester interns, and URI staff—pointed out each of the greenspaces with pride. The tree-lined streetscapes, former vacant lots turned into urban oases, and beautiful parks were all made possible and maintained by teams of dedicated volunteers. “I had been in these parts of the city before, but I hadn’t realized that we [Greenspacers] were the ones that actually did that,” said Rivera as he looked out on the revitalized public spaces along the New Haven tour. “It expanded my horizons to see what else is out there in the city, meet other [Greenspacers], and meet the mayor.”

This was the first year that New Haven’s mayor joined the August bus tour. Mayor Toni Harp listened intently to the histories of each site. At the post-tour pizza and salad dinner donated by Kitchen Zinc in Beaver Ponds Park, the mayor made thoughtful remarks about how the tour helped her realize the commitment of time and energy that Greenspacers are making to improve public lands throughout New Haven. She was impressed with the number of people involved, the hours given to community service, the strong community connections with URI, and the impact on the City. It was clear that Mayor Harp values what is so special about Greenspace and the importance for sharing our work with each other.

Equally important, Greenspacers themselves clearly value the work. They have time and again verbalized what they appreciate about the program—in on-site conversations, in letters to URI—but the clearest signal comes through in their unspoken commitment. We look forward to starting our third decade of greenspace work this coming summer. We look forward to the time when New York denizens take bus tours of New Haven, marveling at the green infrastructure built out by our network of volunteers.

Anna Ruth Pickett graduated from Yale’s School of Forestry & Environmental Studies in 2010 and went directly to work for URI’s Greenspace program. She is currently the Development and Outreach Manager.
Over the summer, I worked as a community forestry intern with URI. When I share that fact, the most common response is understandable: “Oh, so how many trees did you plant?” I hasten to explain that URI’s Community Greenspace program, now celebrating its twentieth year, is about more than just planting trees. I worked on environmental restoration projects with six different neighborhood groups, each group with its own particular goals. As a result, my role was to provide tools, technical advice, and material inputs, like plants and mulch, on six very different projects.

That said, regardless of a group’s overall aims, planting trees was an unfailingly exciting prospect—a pinnacle event that reliably drew out more volunteers than usual. Although my groups planted far more shrubs and perennials than trees, it was the trees that elicited the most satisfaction. One can’t help but wonder: why are people so attracted to the idea of planting trees? My experience this summer has given me a few ideas.

While almost anyone can plunk a hosta or daylily into the ground, planting a young tree takes team effort. There’s a good deal of shoveling involved—digging the pit, adding compost to the soil, topping it all off with mulch—and so there’s a good deal of camaraderie to be had in sweating away together, especially when the diggers encounter large roots or rocks that require heroic effort to remove. Then there’s the matter of the tree itself. With roots and earth attached, a sapling two inches in diameter generally weighs a few hundred pounds and is upwards of ten feet tall. It’s a living being that needs attentive handling; muscling it around haphazardly is a recipe for snapped branches and wounded bark. A crew of three (two to move and one to direct) is typically necessary for the task of getting the tree off the truck and into the ground. There’s a moment of bated breath as the sapling is carefully, slowly, rolled into the freshly dug pit, centered, straightened vertically. This is the climax of the tree-planting plotline.

The rest is falling action: cutting the root ball loose from its wrappings, refilling the pit with soil and compost, building a ring of mulch around the base, and giving it a good watering. We haul extra soil away by wheelbarrow and dump it in an unobtrusive corner. We retrieve tools and return them to the truck. We’re done.

People don’t shed tears over a vegetable garden at summer’s end, but we mourn when old trees are cut down. They evoke a sense of history, stability, and memory.

Everyone gathers around to admire the new tree. It’s slender and fragile-looking, and still a bit traumatized from the transplant process, but see how it reaches up straight and tall for the sky?

It’s easy, in fact, to imagine how the stature of a tree and its lifespan might be compelling to humans. Flowers are beautiful and vegetables are sustenance, but they are usually small things, on the delicate side. There’s only so much interaction a person can have with them. A tree is useful, yes, and often laces a beautiful pattern against the sky, but you can also lean against it, take shelter under it, wrap your arms around it. If you helped to put that tree in the ground, you may well feel the urge to squeeze it with affection. (I certainly do.) Having planted a tree, you could spend your life watching it grow into stately maturity. It might live to shade your grandchildren.

People don’t shed tears over a vegetable garden at summer’s end, but we mourn when old trees are cut down. They evoke a sense of history, stability, and memory. Consider the metaphors we have: people can be said to “put down roots”, have “deep roots”, or conversely be “uprooted” and “rootless.” There are positive connotations to being rooted like a tree (in English, at least). It’s unsurprising that trees serve as a rallying point and universal symbol for environmentalism. Planting one is an act of hope, an expression of care for the future.

We don’t know how people will be living in a hundred years, but we can be reasonably sure that they will thank us for leaving them a legacy of trees.

Mariana Lo is a Master of Environmental Management student at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. Her studies and work focus on the intersection between social justice and ecological health.
A Gift for Yale Employees, a Gift for the Community

by Brenda Naegel

Once a small idea, the introduction of environmentally friendly gifts to Yale’s Employee Service Recognition program has burgeoned into an array of very popular gift choices. This year, for the first time, Yale staff members celebrating five-year milestone anniversaries beginning at their tenth year of employment have the option of supporting tree planting on campus in lieu of receiving a traditional gift to commemorate their years of service to Yale. This new option responds to the desire expressed by Yale employees for alternative gifts that are environmentally and socially responsible.

Operations manager and Yale alumnus Tim Bertaccini, an honoree who chose to celebrate 30 years of Yale service with the tree planting said, “I thought the tree planting alternative for your milestone award was a terrific idea. I love trees. I hope many others follow suit. It is a great way to make Yale and New Haven greener and healthier.”

"I feel that the land that Yale sits on is a living, breathing part of the community and, as a New Haven resident, it's an honor to be able to give back and be of service to our community."

Bertaccini is in good company. Since its addition to the program in the early spring, 27 recent honorees chose tree planting as their gift. At the inaugural tree-planting event on May 10, 2014, magnolia and oak trees were planted along the Farmington Canal trail near Yale Health in honor of 11 individuals. The event coincided with the Yale alumni Day of Service activities where alumni volunteers and staff members, including four honorees, worked side-by-side to plant the trees.

During Celebrate Sustainability Week (Oct. 6-10, 2014), several more trees were added to campus at the Divinity School to honor 16 staff members. Several honorees attending the ceremony with their families and supervisors took great delight in both helping and cheering on those planting the greenery. In gratitude, the Reverend Henry L. Slack Dean and Lillian Claus Professor of New Testament bestowed a blessing on the honorees and the new trees (dogwood, ginkgo, honey locust, and sugar maple).

“The Yale Office of Sustainability is very supportive of the Employee Service Recognition program that offers a green gift option,” said Ginger Chapman, Director of the Yale Office of Sustainability. “The tree-planting program is a wonderful way for employees to be congratulated and commended for their service at Yale and receive a gift that allows them to contribute in a meaningful and long-lasting way to the health and beauty of the Yale campus and the New Haven community.”

Honoree Heidi Richard chose the tree planting option and participated in the tree-planting activity on May 10. “When I saw the tree-planting option, I thought the partnership with URI was absolutely brilliant. I'm really passionate about the environment—that's where my heart is. I feel that the land that Yale sits on is a living, breathing part of the community and, as a New Haven resident, it's an honor to be able to give back and be of service to our community,” said Richard, who serves as Administrative Director in the dean’s office at Yale’s School of Public Health. “From a School of Public Health perspective, there are so many benefits to planting trees: beautification, crime reduction, promoting physical activity, and cleaning the air. New Haven is one of the worst cities in the country for outdoor air pollution. Not a coincidence, there is a high prevalence of asthma here so this is a meaningful way to give back to the community on so many levels,” added Richard.

As the saying goes, “mighty oaks from little acorns grow”—true for the trees that are planted, and true for the program itself.

Brenda Lee Naegel is the associate director for Yale University Human Resources Communications and oversees the university’s Employee Service Recognition gift program. Naegel is actively engaged in furthering sustainability in the community.
Greenspacers after a lunch near the Grand Army Plaza, Prospect Park, during their tour of New York City.