October first broke with gray skies and seemingly relentless rain—for many, the kind of weather that would inspire a day indoors. But it was a planting day, with three white pines and two velvet pillar crabapples scheduled to go in the ground at the corner of Ella T. Grasso Boulevard and Derby Avenue, where members of the Monitor Square Greenspace group had been working for over a year to restore a neglected site. Despite the downpour, I wasn’t concerned about turnout. My first evening of work with the neighbors of West River, months before, had brought much worse—an electrical storm so intense that Chris Ozyck, Associate Director of URI, had called to remind me that the safest place to be was in the truck, parked, preferably not under a tree.

In West River, that last order is becoming more difficult to follow with each passing year. Since 2009, the Monitor Square Greenspace group has been actively tending to the local urban tree canopy, planting over a dozen trees together and caring for twice as many that have been planted by others. The effort began when the group’s founder and current leader, John Fitzpatrick, took stock of the time and energy he was investing in his own home and realized he ought to do the same in the neighborhood beyond his front door. In their first season the group planted five trees and installed a host of shrubs and perennials to beautify the park. The following summer volunteers continued work on the flowerbeds in Monitor Square and planted thirteen more

(continued on page 3)
“One can but marvel at her foresight and the scope of her success,” said Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

While at Yale, Wangari enthusiastically joined the New Haven community. She recognized the links between her work and the work of URI — both seek to engage local groups in universal improvement. I marveled as I learned how she taught Kenyan women to gather the seeds of trees in the forest, grow seedlings, and then plant the trees for use as fuelwood and fodder. From this simple process Kenyan women drew income and political voice.

Wangari helped our Greenspace volunteers see how their efforts paralleled and reinforced the planting of trees by Kenyan women. She understood and promoted the straightforward fact that we are all bound and committed to each other through a single home.

Two years later, Greenspace volunteers called our office to express that they had heard the good news — as they put it — of our friend Wangari. She had won the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize for her work on sustainable development, democracy, justice, and peace.

Since then, she worked with the United Nations to inspire the planting of more than 11 billion trees worldwide.

Upon learning the news that she had been awarded the Nobel Prize, Wangari spoke about her work:

It is evident that many wars are fought over resources which are now becoming increasingly scarce. If we conserve our resources better, fighting over them would not then occur...so, protecting the global environment is directly related to securing peace...those of us who understand the complex concept of the environment have the burden to act. We must not tire, we must not give up, we must persist.

In October, the world lost a selfless, grounded, and tireless woman — in short, a hero: Wangari Maathai, who passed away from cancer at the age of 71. Her legacy is immeasurable. In her life, she inspired all of us who knew her, and taught us to continue her work.

Wangari was a woman who believed that the environment can bridge, inspire, restore, and revitalize the communities in which we live. Her passing is a great loss to all of us who have been inspired by her work.

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**The Caretaker’s Epidemic**

John Fitzpatrick explains his custom-rigged watering truck.

**URBAN ISSUES**

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[www.yale.edu/uri](http://www.yale.edu/uri)
On the afternoon of Sunday, August 28, citizens of New Haven ventured outside their homes for the first time in 20 hours to observe the destruction wrought by Tropical Storm Irene. A tempest nearly as large as the state of Connecticut had passed over the city, leaving New Haven battered in its wake. Hundreds of homes sat powerless, downed branches rendered roads impassable, and dozens of trees lay capsize in the streets and parks, soil clinging to freshly exposed roots. Although New Haven had avoided the flooding that devastated many Northeastern communities, it was nonetheless confronted with a daunting restoration.

Yet for all the wreckage it left, the tropical storm, downgraded from hurricane status just before making landfall, also gave New Havenites an opportunity to serve their city. As Irene sped its way across New England, a small army of public employees and volunteers poured into the leaf-strewn streets and began to address the damages.

The silver lining in the aftermath was a reinvigorated unity among New Haven residents. The cleanup effort cemented the bonds, not always obvious, that connect civil servants, students, and citizenry.

The groundwork for the preparation was laid the day before the hurricane arrived. Hired crews entered the city and took up stations at local firehouses while city workers positioned themselves in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), an underground bunker straight out of a disaster movie. Elsewhere in the city, preparations took on an almost surreal aspect: the New Haven Parks Department spent the day removing 77 horses from the Lighthouse Point Park carousel and relocating the antiques in a concrete building. All over the city, residents stalked their lawn furniture, stocked their cupboards with canned goods, filled their bathtubs in case of water outages, and stocked their cupboards with canned goods, filled their bathtubs in case of water outages. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) buzzed with activity, receiving a lot of devastation. "You saw big trees that had broken onto houses, big trees uprooted on power lines. There was a lot of devastation." The cleanup made bedfellows of groups that might not ordinarily interact: for instance, Friends of East Rock found themselves working side-by-side with dozens of Yale College freshmen. Lauren Zucker, Associate Vice President at Yale and Director of New Haven Affairs, coordinated Yale’s involvement in the Cityscape to assist in the clean up of the city’s parks after the storm; Irene presented Cityscape with a unique opportunity to instead integrate students into New Haven through service. "We quickly switched the focus of Cityscape to assist in the clean up of the city’s parks after the storm," Ms. Zucker said. "We coordinated with the city and URI to identify specific parks that needed additional resources and coordinated our program around those efforts. We wanted to work in partnership with the existing neighborhood associations that were out there. It was a great opportunity to strengthen the students’ sense of their local community while contributing to an important and needed civic endeavor." The community, in turn, appreciated Yale’s presence. "Friends of East Rock Park saw the storm as an opportunity to get Yaleis involved in neighborhood affairs," said Justin Ellicker, an alderman in East Rock and himself a graduate of the Yale Schools of Forestry and Environmental Studies and of Management. "Students are sometimes so focused on where they’re going that they forget where they are." According to Mr. Ellicker, the hurricane also pulled residents of his neighborhood into the fold. "When somebody shows up to a volunteer project, it’s a great opportunity to educate them about what we do in the parks, and to enlist them for future volunteer events," he said. "People regarded it as a chance to help, and maybe some of them will return to help in the future." The notion that helping to repair the city would strengthen citizens ties to it was widely echoed by those involved in the restoration. "I think people always have a deep commitment to the city, but the hurricane fostered community engagement, altruism, and citizen connection. Here’s hoping those efforts linger longer.

Bob Levine agreed with that commitment, although he qualified it by emphasizing that citizen volunteerism is nothing new. "The New Haven parks system is the recipient of thousands of volunteer hours every year, so [the hurricane] was just another example of people coming and helping," Mr. Levine said. "There are a lot of people in New Haven who have a strong connection to their parks and their neighborhoods, and we work with them all the time. I didn’t exactly notice a change in behavior [after Irene], but it intensified people’s desire to help." Most telling, perhaps, was the anonymous benevolence that proliferated throughout the city: several times, Mr. Levine saw trash bags full of debris deposited outside of parks that had not been targeted by any Friends group or formal cleanup, acts of magnanimity that could only be motivated by people’s genuine devotion to the welfare and management of their city.

Despite the hard work of the city’s employees and volunteers, the effects of Irene linger. A number of downed trees still block access to the parks, and the black stumps of toppled street trees mar sidewalks. Erosion swept up to fifteen feet of land along Long Wharf into the Long Island Sound, and the destroyed dunes will require millions of dollars to restore (although the city does expect support from FEMA). Irene’s legacies in the Northeast will be disastrous flooding, property damage, and loss of life; and when we recall the storm, our memories should flash first to those tragedies. But in New Haven, at least, Irene had another set of impacts: the storm fostered community engagement, altruism, and citizen connection. Here’s hoping those efforts linger longer.

A New Haven resident volunteers his time for cleanup.
Building Bridges Under Bridges

by Adenike Adeyeye

Dark, dangerous, unwelcoming: all words that were once used to describe the stretch of Humphrey Street that passes underneath I-91. Though this no-man's land physically connects the State Street and Joedlyn Square Park communities, its disrepair long signaled ownership by neither – a fact that neighbors worked together to change this summer. Motivated by a desire to create a more pedestrian-friendly walkway bridging the two neighborhoods, the Upper State Street Greenspace group rallied over 50 volunteers to reclaim the patch of land through tree planting.

Ben Berkowitz and Emma Richards, leaders of the Upper State Street group, spearheaded the effort. (Ben is also the co-founder of SeeClickFix, an online tool for empowering neighborhood improvement; Emma is a Community Manager at SeeClickFix.) Months before I joined them as their summer intern, they worked with the Connecticut Department of Transportation, New Haven officials, and Chris Ozzyk at URI to plan for concrete removal and tree planting. By the time I arrived in June, they had received approval for their plan, they had selected species to plant, and they were ready to begin.

Despite this precocious start, one nagging question remained, a question that was once used to describe the space. “Who's going to water the trees?” Ben and Emma anticipated a degree of help from community members, but this was not a conventional planting. These trees would be far from people’s homes, growing in a place generally viewed as barren and unfriendly. The Upper State Street group would have to attract volunteers to ensure stewardship. This would be no simple task.

Ben and Emma were master advertisers. They recruited friends and colleagues, posted notices on SeeClickFix, and attracted media attention. Innovative ideas brought new members to the group. Kati Fredlund announced the project on her regular Tuesday walkday with a sidewalk chalk drawing in the underpass. “After seeing the chalk drawing from Joedlyn Square Park, a man offered to come out and help water the trees throughout the summer,” Emma explained. “That was pretty cool.”

The best advertisement, however, was the volunteers – digging, planting, laughing, listening to music, and having fun. One bicyclist stopped by in our second week to ask what we were doing. Volunteers took a break from removing concrete to explain the project. They invited him to join.

Now concrete removal is not the most attractive prospect: after the Department of Public Works cuts an 8’ x 8’ slab of concrete into smaller squares, volunteers must pry out each 100-pound block of concrete with just a crowbar and a sledgehammer, exposing gravel and sand below. They must then excavate a foot of the gravel and shovel it in topsoil to create a pit where the tree roots can grow and thrive.

The bicyclist, having heard the pitch, rode off, stopped at a nearby store, then disappeared for home with groceries. ‘Within 20 minutes he came back and grabbed a shovel,’” said Ben. “That was every week this summer to help us after that first day. It was awesome, and a perfect example of how this project helped bring communities together.” That community spirit continues, even after the planting season. Upper State Street volunteers led by Ben continue to water the trees today. In the wake of Hurricane Irene, the Greenspace group converged to check on its trees.

Throughout the summer, people commented on how much the plantings were changing the underpass. Exciting, inspiring, green, and beautiful is how they came to describe the space. With a few months of planning and an abundance of enthusiasm, the Upper State Street group transformed and reinvited that small but important stretch of Humphrey Street.

The History and Future of Three Trees

by Amy Zvonar

It was the last day of planting this summer and I was meeting the men in my Crossroads Greenspace group for the first time. Distinct from most Greenspace groups, the men who volunteer from Crossroads are enrolled in a full-time residential substance abuse recovery program. Their time on the campus is temporary, and so the volunteers who come out to work on beautifying the surrounding area change from summer to summer, week to week. Yet the participants’ goals remain aligned with those of our other Greenspace groups: the men want to be outside, improve the area in which they live, and give back to their community. They also, of course, want to learn how to plant trees.

On this particular day, we had three trees to plant in a grassy strip located between the Crossroads campus and McConaughy Terraces, a public housing complex. The request had come earlier in the summer from one of the Terrace residents, but the trees were meant to benefit both groups. The Crossroads men pointed out that much of their living space is parking lot, and they would appreciate the shade and color provided by the trees. Excitement filled the air as we broke ground for the first two saplings.

It’s not easy to plant three trees on a hot August day. The ground was dry and hard, and the larger picture faded from view as the day wore on and the men wore out. I could tell they needed a morale boost, a reminder of why they had come to plant in the first place. With two trees in the ground, I retreated for a bit to think and understood that a drastic transformation had taken place. Evidently, residents of McConaughy Terrace understood the same thing. As I thought about how to motivate the final planting, a resident from across the street excitedly crossed over, smiling broadly and anxious, it seemed, to talk with someone. As soon as she got within earshot, I offered the research on the positive force the men needed to finish planting on a high note. She had helped them step back and reframe the larger picture, notice the positive changes they had wrought. She was, in short, the human connection anchoring their work.

I might see these trees only a handful of times during the rest of my time in New Haven. For these men, their limited time at Crossroads offers a short window during which they’ll enjoy the trees. For the residents of the area though, these trees transformed their home. For as long as they stand the trees will connect McConaughy Terraces with the men who planted them and to the larger Crossroads community.

The Crossroads team with two trees in the ground, one more to go.

Amy is a second year at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. She will graduate in the spring with a Master’s in Environmental Management.

The wonderful work of our Greenspace interns is possible because of generous, consistent, and under-recognized support. For 15 years, the Office of State and New Haven Affairs at Yale, through its President’s Public Service Fellowship, has been one of three essential sponsors for our Greenspace interns. The Yale College Class of 1964 of times during the rest of my time in New Haven. For these men, their limited time at Crossroads offers a short window during which they’ll enjoy the trees. For the residents of the area though, these trees transformed their home. For as long as they stand the trees will connect McConaughy Terraces with the men who planted them and to the larger Crossroads community.

It is easy to celebrate the tree, but here we celebrate the roots.

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