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at the Yale School of Forestry
& Environmental Studies*



Photo: Josh Schachter

REGROWTH DURING TRANSITIONS

by
**Margaret
Carmalt**

A new component of the GreenSkills Program, to be launched this spring, will assist ex-offenders in the transition out of incarceration by pairing the development of valuable job skills with work that contributes to local communities and the environment. This program aims to slow or stop recidivism and extend a hand to those who are often marginalized.

Twenty-five men and women are released from prison into New Haven every week. About fourteen of these twenty-five will return to the Hill, Fair Haven, Newhallville, or the West River neighborhoods. Though these neighborhoods comprise only one-third of New Haven's total population, they account for more than half of the city's prison population. Much of this population will return to poverty and joblessness, precisely those conditions that contributed to their arrests. Of the 600,000 people released from prison each year in the United States, about two out of three will likely return to prison within three years, many for basic parole violations.

Employment is a key factor in breaking the cycle of recidivism.

Mayor DeStefano's announcement last fall to plant 10,000 trees in New Haven over the next five years inspired URI Director, Colleen Murphy-Dunning, to make a connection previously ignored: what if URI expanded the GreenSkills Program, now focused on local teens, to include ex-offenders? The kernel of this project developed through prior collaboration with Crossroads, a court-mandated drug treatment program located in the Amity neighborhood. Substance abuse, along with poverty and joblessness, is a major contributor to rates of imprisonment. According to The 2009 Criminal Justice Transition Coalition, "Between 60 and 80 percent of individuals under supervision of the criminal justice system in the U.S." have committed some drug-related crime."

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Dylan Walsh, Editor

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Turning problems into opportunities may sound a tired phrase, but it is how we choose to see and meet our mission of engaging people in stewardship of the urban environment. Now more than ever, given the economic hardship and environmental concerns facing our society, we need to embrace new ways of thinking and carrying out our mission. The cornerstone of our work in the community has always been listening and supporting the priorities identified by volunteers rather than agendas of our own. Our work is about transforming the neglected into the essential. It is about involving people in a manner that makes their environment personally and directly meaningful. We are committed to that thread binding an improved environment with improved livelihoods.

By hiring local youth to plant trees, the GreenSkills program is one clear example of this work. In her cover article, GreenSkills Manager Margaret Carmalt describes the expansion of the GreenSkills program to involve substance abuse clients and ex-offenders. This new direction not only improves our urban environment, but offers job training, entry into new employment paths, and an assisted return to the community. Planting trees while recovering from substance abuse addiction gives these individuals an opportunity to restore their environments, their communities, and themselves.

Yale student Justin Freiberg describes his own work on these issues through the establishment of the Urban Foodshed Collaborative, an entrepreneurial urban gardening experiment designed for local, New Haven youth. Other articles in this issue cover the innovative expansion and uses of street trees in the city, revealing how a tree along the sidewalk can provide any number of benefits, from slowing cars to giving hope.

In 2010, we intend to plant 1,000 trees on public land with Greenspace volunteers and GreenSkills interns. These newly planted trees will inspire the knowledge that change can be made through unconventional means. Here is the hope of a new decade.

Coll Colleen Murphy-Dunning

For the past 6 years, as a part of rehabilitation, residents of Crossroads have planted trees as a Greenspace group on the streets around their facility. These trees act as an enduring testament to the residents' hard work, and as a positive contribution to their communities. The transformation of a street is a gratifying accomplishment for the workers, and a deeply appreciated enhancement to the neighborhood. Community members continue to express their thanks for the work that's been done.

Inspired by the success of the Crossroads partnership, Murphy-Dunning asked Jeannette Penniman, a student in Yale College, to explore possibilities for collaboration between GreenSkills and local ex-offender reentry organizations. "Planting trees while recovering from substance abuse addiction gives these individuals an opportunity to restore their environments, their communities, and themselves," said Murphy-Dunning. Supported by a grant from the Dwight Hall Urban Fellows Program, Jeannette identified two local organizations with potential for mutually beneficial teamwork with URI: Crossroads and Empower Enterprise.

Already familiar through its work with the Greenspace Program, Crossroads provided a natural partner. When Miguel Caldera, a medical doctor and Executive Director of Crossroads, learned of the GreenSkills Program, he was eager to develop the partnership. He has seen first-hand the cathartic effects of tree planting. He knows that employment will help Crossroads residents establish themselves in the community at a critical early stage of re-entry. And he knows that, with new job skills and a financial foundation, ex-offenders will be less dependent on old, deleterious relationships and patterns of behavior.

Empower Enterprise, URI's second partner, is a new organization established through a grant from the Casey Foundation. The mission of the Casey Foundation is to "foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families." Though seemingly incongruent with prison re-entry, the Casey Foundation reports that 10 million American children, "have a parent in the criminal justice system at some point during their childhood," and that, "almost 20 percent of children in foster care have parents who are in prison." For these reasons, the Casey Foundation is incorporating prison re-entry into its network of grantees.



The Casey Foundation is helping to develop Empower Enterprise as a New Haven-based employment program that focuses on peer mentoring and establishes support networks for formerly incarcerated individuals. Participants in Empower Enterprise will be placed in the GreenSkills apprenticeship for part of their job training.

Statistics clearly demonstrate the colossal failure of prisons in achieving goals on both systemic and individual levels. URI, with Crossroads and Empower Enterprise, is re-examining re-entry to establish new programs rich with potential and inspiring in scope. Ex-offenders are often marginalized upon returning from incarceration. The new GreenSkills

effort counters this marginalization by offering marketable skills to aid ex-offenders in becoming assets to their local economies. URI seeks to establish a constructive and beneficial approach to re-entry that provides ex-offenders the opportunity to positively contribute to their work, their communities, and their environment. In this way, bringing former prisoners home becomes a hopeful step towards a better environment.

Margaret Carmalt is URI's new GreenSkills Manager. She has previously worked as an urban forester for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.

Improving Sidewalks for Healthier Trees

by
Dylan
Walsh

Imagine Edwards Street devoid of trees. Imagine Wooster Square without the cherry blossoms. Dick Miller, City Engineer for New Haven, leaned his chair back with hands flat on the table as he watched me consider the proposition. The chair fell forward. He sipped his coffee. "There would be a completely different feel to the place, a different feel for the folks passing through. Drivers would think, 'I don't want to experience this neighborhood. I want to get to my destination.'"

Once taken for granted, cities increasingly recognize the benefits of street trees. Jim Travers, in this issue, describes their prospective role in calming traffic. Margaret Carmalt, also in this publication, touches on their tremendous power to heal ex-prison populations and their communities. With the goal of planting 10,000 trees in the next five years, Mayor DeStefano's TreeHaven 10K campaign publicly legitimizes the value of street trees by pushing forward with a massive increase in planting efforts. Simultaneous to the planting of new trees,

the City of New Haven is renewing its focus on the care and management of those already in the ground.

New Haven historically mandated a tree pit—the grassy or gravelly square in which street trees are planted—of at least four-by-four feet in size. With such narrow dimensions, the care and management of trees has been problematic, even counter-productive, for city workers. "Keeping trees alive was a basic issue," said Miller while describing old regulations. "Sidewalks and tree pits were too narrow. As a result, roots began to push the sidewalk up and the curb out into the street, which led the city to consider whether or not trees were really worth the effort." Such constrained growing conditions contribute to the slow attrition currently afflicting New Haven's tree population.

New regulations expand the dimensions of tree pits to at least four-by-eight feet and encourage, wherever possible, continuous grass strips for planting. The metal grates often

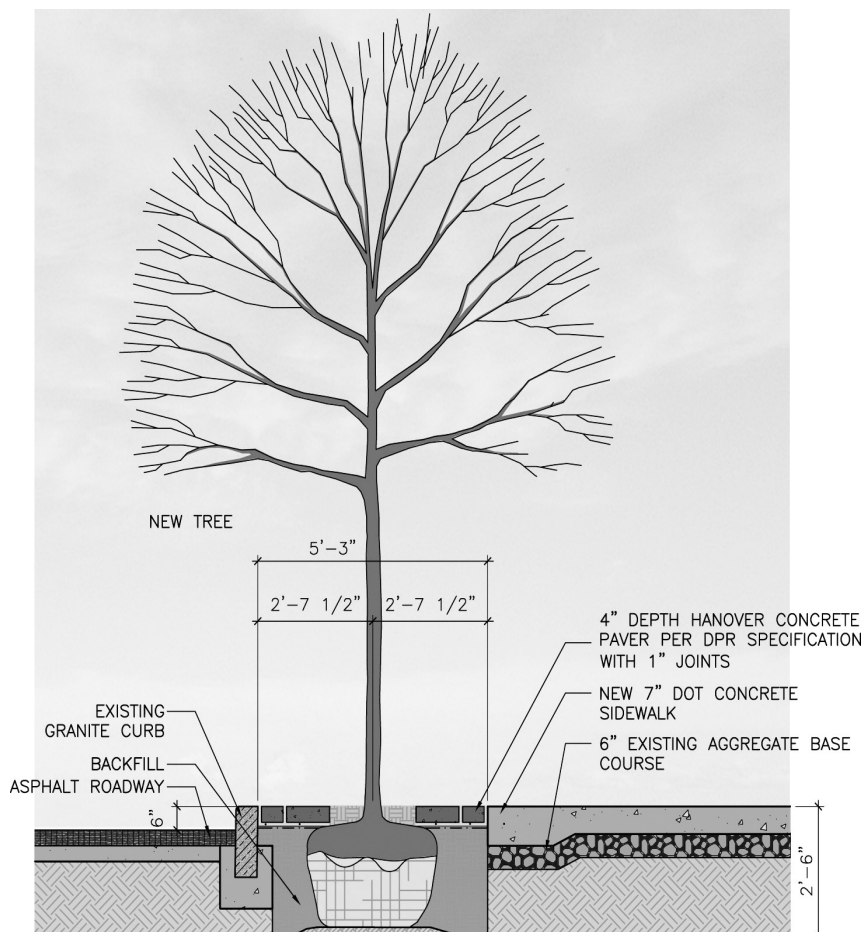
placed over plantings, which have proven more troublesome than helpful in the management of trees, are being replaced by finely ground stone dust—a stable surface that allows trees to grow and water to permeate to the roots. Though seemingly basic changes to regulation, many challenges have arisen integrating these new standards with other existing mandates, like sidewalk widths per the American Disabilities Act: "The placement of a tree pit shall in no cases result in the sidewalk width being less than 5' wide."

The City, working across Engineering, Planning, Parks, and Public Works Departments, has also designed best management practices for construction efforts on or around a roadway. Past regulation provided no incentives for contractors paid to, for example, install a sidewalk; if a tree obstructed construction progress, no framework existed to manage for the health and safety of the tree.

A new standardized policy incorporates the management of tree health into plans for infrastructure maintenance and development. A quality assurance clause notes that, "Prior to any construction activity within the City Right of Way [roadway] where trees may be affected by the work being proposed, the contractor shall contact the Urban Forester, at the New Haven Department of Parks, Recreation, and Trees...At his/her discretion the potential tree(s) that are affected shall be inventoried and a determination made as to its health and the anticipated protection required to ensure the construction activities will have minimal impact on the identified tree(s)."

Tree health factors significantly into progressive urban development, especially as New Haven plans streets for more than automobiles alone. Fantastic efforts are underway to plant more street trees, and now such efforts are matched with fantastic policies to assure the longevity of these trees.

Dylan Walsh (FES '11) is the editor of the newsletter.



Urban Foodshed Collaborative

by
Justin
Freiberg

When you're not a big fan of vegetables, learning the difference between arugula, mizuna, and green wave mustard greens can seem arbitrary, if not downright frustrating. They're all little, green leaves that look and taste pretty much the same. But this was one of the small tasks we set to during a break on our first harvest day this past summer. Four New Haven teenagers each picked a leaf or two. They examined, smelled, tasted. Some of them liked these new flavors. Some distinctly did not. We talked about the differences between them, and what these flavors reminded them of. We talked about the importance of being able to explain the differences, as the four of them were about to make their first delivery to our business partner, Miya's, a restaurant in downtown New Haven. The chefs were waiting to greet us, and the teenagers were responsible for describing what they'd grown and harvested. This was their business.

I founded Urban Foodshed Collaborative – or UFC – in response to a number of relevant trends: the desire of restaurants and markets to source locally-produced, community-enhancing produce; the many vacant lots that could readily be turned into productive space; and, very importantly, the continued need for urban youth to have valuable experiences that pay a deserved wage. All of these trends pointed to the need for programming geared towards youth greening their own neighborhoods with healthy gardens.

The Hixon Center for Urban Ecology supported this bare-bones idea with a grant, and then I took to filling it in. It was called a “collaborative” for a reason – I partnered with many wonderful organizations. I recruited teenagers through the Youth at Work Program and with the advice of Common Ground, aiming to have the crew represent a diversity of neighborhoods. I partnered with the New Haven Land Trust, Chabaso Bakery, and the Yale Divinity School, who had land on which we could pilot the program. Drums No Guns generously led both an opening and closing drum circle.



Marsh Gardens and the Greeley Greenhouse donated greenhouse space.

Once the teens came on-board for their five-week session, we had land to work on, plants for tending, and partner restaurants. Days were spent like those of farmers the world round – with a simple plan at the beginning of the day blossoming into the complex swirl of activities that keeps a farm going. Add to this four plots, not one, and the days flew by.

UFC aims to provide a space and structure for New Haven youth and Yale FES students to connect to the potential of the land right here in New Haven, and to realize the power in local, collaborative solutions. It does so through the transformative act of growing food within an entrepreneurial model. URI took this initiative under its wing and nurtured it this first summer. But the teenagers who participated in this first summer deserve the most credit. They stuck with an experiment, and they made it their own.

They assumed great responsibility, they undertook a substantial and new challenge, and they carried it to a successful conclusion. The seeds have been planted. UFC looks toward next summer with greater expectation. Videos of this past summer's work can be viewed at

www.urbanfoodshed.org.

Justin Freiberg (FES '10) is passionate about sharing the transformative act of growing food with youth.

Private Planters for a Public Cause

by Emily Stevenson

This past fall, URI announced plans to partner with the Mayor's office in planting 10,000 trees over the next five years. To accomplish this goal, URI and New Haven are establishing key partnerships and securing tree-planting commitments from private landholders. These partnerships, which will ideally contribute 5,000 of the 10,000 trees, will include large and small landholders alike: from local universities, corporations, faith-based organizations, and non-profits, to individual New Haven residents, URI, with the City of New Haven is urging people to get outside and plant trees. By working across a spectrum of landholders, URI and New Haven hope to encour-

age multilateral contribution to and understanding of the urban ecosystem.

Among these collaborations, URI will pay particular attention to landholders in areas like Long Wharf, where canopy coverage is most desperately needed. This step, of course, requires identifying those areas that need canopy coverage most.

In 2009, URI collaborated with New Haven, the University of Vermont's Spatial Analysis Lab, and the U.S. Forest Service to compile a comprehensive map illustrating the canopy cover of New Haven. Data analysis highlighted areas in the city that have significantly

less tree cover than other neighborhoods. With this information, collaboration with private landholders can target specific neighborhoods to rectify inequalities in tree cover.

This broad campaign for partnerships is aimed at involving all kinds and sizes of landholders in the improvement of their shared environment. Further ideas for partnerships are welcome as the City strives toward the ambitious goal of 10,000 new trees and the greening of the Elm City!

Emily Stevenson (FES '11) is interested in soil restoration and urban farming.

Innovation: Traffic Calming

by
**Jim
Travers**

Last fall, when residents along Edgewood Way voiced concerns to the Office of Transportation, Traffic and Parking about the speed of traffic on their street, URI partnered with the City of New Haven and the students at Common Ground High School to explore an innovative solution: plant trees.

The Common Ground students, who planted trees on Edgewood Way as a final project for the GreensSkills program, will now measure the effects of these trees on traffic speed over the next four years. Common Ground's Joel Tolman has already recruited classes to help with the collection and analysis of data. His economics students, for example, recently reviewed 2008 and 2009 data on local traffic speeds; these studies were conducted prior to tree planting. New studies, to be supplied in the fall and spring of every year until 2014, will allow comparison and analysis of changes in traffic behavior and residents' impressions of these changes.

This January, Joel's students prepared their first cost benefit-analysis across a spectrum of traffic calming techniques. They presented findings to members of URI and local media representatives. Discussion of street trees as a method of traffic calming highlighted numerous additional benefits alongside reduced traffic speeds Safer Walking Environments,

as the trees clearly delineate sidewalks;

- Increased Security by promoting walking, pride in place, association, ownership of homes, and neighborhood engagement;
- Less Rain Water Runoff due to absorption through leaf and root systems.
- Shade Cover that decreases energy use with natural cooling and wind protection;
- Pollution Mitigation through the uptake of tailpipe emissions and other harmful particulates, many of which contribute to asthma;
- Added Value to Adjacent Homes based on realtor estimates that account for tree lining on the streets.

On top of the students' findings, which will inform the direction of new traffic calming efforts, it is clear that this project has contributed and will continue to contribute to a rich and practical educational experience.

Class work over the next four years will delve into the use of the experimental method, urban design and planning, and basic points of traffic engineering. As the student's fine-tune their data, they will have an opportunity to present their findings to various city officials and participate in the City's Street Smarts "Share the Road" campaign. All of these are first steps toward a new generation of green traffic engineers.

This single effort has implications for the City of New Haven, the students of Common Ground, and the residents of Edgewood Way, who, regardless of effects on traffic over the next four years, will benefit from a greener, tree-lined street. These roots reach wide and deep.

Jim Travers is Deputy Director of Transportation, Traffic and Parking and Board Member of Urban Resources Initiative.



Spring Workshops

Chris Ozyck, Greenspace Manager, will lead all workshops.

6:00-8:00pm, Thursday

All events free and open to the public

Why trees matter

Trees are a critical part of the urban ecosystem that supports us everyday. Learn about your tree canopy and the numerous benefits it provides city-dwellers. Learn also to recognize the stressors that tax our wooden friends and how to reduce or alleviate the effects of these stressors.

April 15: Kroon Hall, 195 Prospect St.

Got trees?

Learn some tree identification tricks and tools to foster a greater understanding of your environment. We will also explore matching the right tree with the right location. Participants are encouraged to consider a place where they would like to plant a tree, and to bring a picture or map if possible.

April 29: URI office, 301 Prospect St.

Prune this, mulch that!

Tree pruning is both an art and a science, but without the proper training it is neither. Learn basics of tree pruning and stewardship of newly planted trees. Chop chop! – this will be a hands-on workshop.

May 13: Westville Library, 37 Harrison

Green side up

Most people get rule #1 in planting a tree, but we all could use some refreshers on best practices and why they really do matter. This workshop, also hands-on, focuses on street tree planting of balled, burlap and container trees.

May 29: Intersection of Grafton and Ferry Streets

Trees, technology and you

Learn how to inventory your trees using technological gadgets, learn more essential tree identification tips, and do this all in a fun environment. What more could you ask for?

June 10: Christopher Martins Restaurant, 860 State St.

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