

DNR: Champions of city trees from throughout Wisconsin lauded for outstanding community service

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MADISON, Wis. – Five individuals and organizations dedicated to protecting, preserving and increasing the number of trees lining city streets, filling community parks and beautifying neighborhoods throughout the state earned recognition from the Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council at the recent 2017 Wisconsin Arborist Association/DNR conference in Green Bay.

“The awards recognize and thank individuals and organizations for their work and commitment to the trees, plantings, habitat and economic benefits they provide,” said **Kristin Gies**, co-chair of the Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council’s award committee. “Reviewing the nominations each year is a wonderful way to see the great things happening around Wisconsin and to support healthy community forests.”

The Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council advises the Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry on the best ways to manage urban and community forest resources.

The recipients of the awards include:

- **Distinguished Service: Sean Gere**, 6-time state champion climber, ISA certified arborist, arboriculture researcher/educator, member of the American Society of Consulting Arborists, the Tree Care Industry Association, and Wisconsin Urban Wood and owner of Gere Tree Care in Madison, Wisconsin. He received this award for contributions to urban forest health, safety of arborists, and community education and awareness. Sean is involved in research and teaching on topics related to tree care, urban ecosystems, and safety for members of the tree care industry, and providing programming for community members to help people and the environment exist together in mutually beneficial ways.
- **Project Partnership: The Popple Trail Invasive Species Removal Project in Webb Park, Reedsburg** earned this award for the excellent demonstration of a collaborative partnership involving numerous community groups of all ages. Because of their effort to remove invasive buckthorn and plant trees to restore the urban forest and enhance wildlife habitat, the recreational and educational opportunities of an urban corridor were increased.
- **Innovations in Urban Forestry:** This category includes two winners. **Adam Alves**, Dane County Forestry Specialist, was recognized for creating sustainable partnerships providing outreach and educational events around arboriculture including climbing events for kids of all abilities. He is the founder of the Dane County Regional Arborist Group dedicated to sharing knowledge and skills involved in urban forestry and promoting arboriculture as an exciting viable career option. **WholeTrees**, a Madison-based architectural design and building-products company focused on bringing low-value forest byproducts into high-value building markets, received the second award in this category for their use of whole urban local trees in the construction of Festival Foods at the Galaxie in Madison. This project involved extended collaborations and generated income for local businesses employing researchers, engineers, builders, and foresters throughout the Madison area. The project demonstrated how continued partnerships between cities and local businesses can find new ways to utilize local wood for building.
- **Lifetime Achievement: Dick Rideout** received this award in recognition of his leadership, organizational skills, and dedication promoting and improving urban forestry, which has had a lasting impact on arboriculture in Wisconsin, the Midwest and across the country. Dick served as Wisconsin's first urban forestry coordinator. Until his retirement in 2015, his career focused on ensuring the future of healthy urban forests in Wisconsin and the U.S. His legacy includes the DNR Urban Forestry Grants Program, Champion Tree

Program, Urban Forestry Awards, and engagement in the Tree City, Tree Line, and Tree Campus Award programs and Arbor Day observances and activities across Wisconsin.

Interested in previous winners? Have ideas for nominees? The deadline for 2018 nominees is October 31, 2017. However, you can nominate your community tree champions any time. Learn more by visiting DNR.wi.gov and searching for the Wisconsin [Urban Forestry Council](#).