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## Communities, Individuals, Businesses Honored for Work on Behalf of Nebraska Trees

**LINCOLN, Neb.**—They say it takes a village to raise a child, but it takes more than just one village to make our towns green and healthy. It takes countless volunteers, community leaders, educators, businesses, newspapers and others involved in greening their communities.

That's what the annual Tree City USA Recognition Day is all about, honoring those who work hard to educate, fund, inform and promote trees in Nebraska. This year's recipients gathered in Lincoln April 2.

Two volunteers, Holly Carlini and Mona Anderson, had their hands full when they volunteered through Keep North Platte and Lincoln County Beautiful and Greener Nebraska Towns North Platte. During the drought, they kept the project going by weeding and watering. They received the **Outstanding Tree Care Award** for establishing newly planted trees along a previously barren section of Burlington Boulevard in North Platte.

Nebraska's First Lady Sally Ganem received the **Educator Award**. As the ReTree Nebraska honorary chair since 2007, Ganem has supported tree-planting across state by visiting schools during ReTree Nebraska Week, leading students in tree plantings and promoting the benefits of trees. She has also attended Nebraska Statewide Arboretum Fall tours and was the keynote luncheon speaker at the Chadron Greener Nebraska Towns Conference last fall. The First Lady helps host the annual Arbor Day and ReTree Week plantings at the State Capitol.

The Scottsbluff Star-Herald newspaper received the **Media Award** for publishing tree and landscape-related articles with technical information and promoting community events related to the Green Nebraska Towns tree planting and water-wise projects. The newspaper sent staff reporter Brandon Nelson on the Western Community Forestry bus tour to Fort Collins, Colo., to see first-hand how successful community forestry programs work. The tour gave Nelson and others a chance to hear professionals and community leaders talk about their successes and struggles. Nelson published an in-depth piece on the tour and the benefits of community forests.

The **Utility Award** went to the Omaha Public Power District, in partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation, for giving away 2,000 trees to customers in just four days through its Energy-Saving Trees Program. Customers used an online web tool to choose the best planting location to make the most of energy savings, while reminding them of the importance of planting away from overhead power lines. According to the Arbor Day Foundation and iTree data, the program will save \$265,000 in energy costs.

Connie McDonough received the **Volunteer Award** for her work in Scottsbluff and her vital role in establishing partnerships, raising project funds and implementing landscape projects with other volunteer groups. She successfully wrote a grant to create an arboretum and botanical garden that represents what the pioneers would have seen when they traveled across Nebraska, how we see our Nebraska landscape now, and how we hope to see it in the future.

The **Business Award** went to the University of Nebraska Federal Credit Union (NUFCU) for promoting ReTree Week and tree planting to their members through an e-statement campaign called 'Plant a Tree, Go Paperless.' The NUFCU pledged to plant one tree in honor of each member who transitioned from paper statements to e-statements.

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The Chadron Greener Nebraska Towns committee received the **Community Enhancement Award** for improving Chadron's green infrastructure through intensive tree planting and waterwise projects. The committee hosted a fall conference to educate individuals and communities about planted landscapes.

Greener Nebraska Towns (GNT) is an effort to significantly improve the green infrastructure (community landscape) of communities across Nebraska. Only six other towns have been selected as initial GNT partner communities:

- Scottsbluff
- North Platte
- Hastings
- Lincoln
- Grand Island
- Fremont
- Bellevue

These communities received grant funding and technical assistance to implement intensive tree planting, waterwise landscaping and targeted education. GNT and ReTree Fall mini-grants are funded by the Nebraska Environmental Trust, a beneficiary of the Nebraska Environmental Trust. Cities, campuses and utilities also received awards.

Shamrock Nursery of O'Neill received the **Green Industry Award** for its support of the community forest. The nursery co-hosted a tree-planting and root health workshop in partnership with the Nebraska Forest Service, UNL Extension and the O'Neill Tree Board during fall ReTree Week. Participants planted hybrid and disease-resistant American elms at the O'Neill cemetery to replace American elms lost to Dutch elm disease. Shamrock Nursery continued outreach in the community by promoting and organizing a tree-pruning workshop in the spring.

The North Platte Natural Resource District (NRD) in Scottsbluff received a new award called **For Future Generations Award** for their coordination of a ReTree Week mini-grant to plant 100 trees in their district communities. The resource district provided countless staff time to promote the project through the media, organized planting locations and delivery of trees, and provided a planting workshop at a local arboretum.

"The leadership in which the North Platte NRD demonstrated embodied the essence of the award, which helps to improve the sustainability of the community forest so that future generations will benefit as we do today," said Jessica Kelling, ReTree Nebraska coordinator.

The Nebraska Forest Service, an affiliate of the University of Nebraska, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR), works to enrich lives by protecting, restoring and utilizing Nebraska's tree and forest resources.

**For more information about tree-related awards, contact Jessica Kelling at 402-472-0200 or visit [nfs.unl.edu](http://nfs.unl.edu).**

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