

The Faces of Urban Forestry



Barbara O'Brien
Retired librarian



Pathway Planting Leads to Safer and Friendlier Neighborhood

“I always wanted to be a forest ranger, but I became a librarian,” says Barbara O'Brien. Now, she says, “I'm a mini-forest ranger.”

Barbara's chance to work with trees in the great outdoors came when Trees for Tucson, the City of Tucson and the Broadmoor-Broadway Village Neighborhood Association's Urban Forestry Committee joined forces to transform a rocky, six-block-long dirt pathway into one that was more attractive, less prone to crime and more easily walked by senior citizens. The result is a paved walkway with palo verde, desert willows and other drought-tolerant native trees on one side and – under utility lines on the other side – a variety of desert flowers and shrubs donated by gardeners in the area.

Besides the physical transformation, less crime and increased use for exercise and fresh air, the benefits from this project came from having neighbors do the planting. Work days, as well as tours and special events, continue to be scheduled along the pathway. Barbara reports, “Neighbors from here and from blocks away come out on a Sunday or Saturday with shovels and go to work. You're meeting people you wouldn't meet ordinarily because your paths don't cross. I've lived here for 25 years, and I've known neighbors who live close by. But now I know people blocks away.”

“I'm one of the most senior people on the street. I'm making friendships of all ages!”

– Barbara O'Brien



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A joint project of U.S. Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry, the National Association of State Foresters, and the Arbor Day Foundation. For more information visit arborday.org/faces