

The Faces of Urban Forestry



Em LeBlanc
Third grade teacher



Baton Rouge,
Louisiana

Tree Program Makes a Difference for Inner-city Kids

Many people don't give low-income, inner-city kids much of a chance for success. Fortunately, Em LeBlanc is not one of them. Most of her students live in poverty and she uses every possible tool and resource to give her students a better chance in life.

Em found one opportunity when she met Penny Miller of the Louisiana State University Burden Center. Penny had just managed a U.S. Forest Service grant received through the Louisiana Office of Forestry. The grant was used to support a program designed to teach low-income disadvantaged students the value of the urban forest. Funds helped to replace signage on the Center's urban forest trail, publish educational materials, and provide student transportation to the site.

Today, Em coordinates the participation of all 80 of her school's 3rd grade students in this program. She explains that the students learn about trees and "urban sprawl and its impact on the environment..."

Em believes the program is working and feels her students now see trees in a different way. "Just for them to have actually been in the woods, in a forest, seeing what trees are like, knowing different tree names, what a tree is like in the inside – that's a big deal for them," says Em. She also reports that the students have displayed an increased awareness, excitement, and curiosity about the urban forest and the urban ecosystem. And it has had an impact on her, personally. She says, "Seeing how much of a difference it makes and how much these kids have succeeded is why I've stayed in this school."

“Most of the kids have never seen a forest before. It is something foreign to them.”

– Em LeBlanc



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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