

The Faces of Urban Forestry



Lori Kiesow
Arboretum
Executive Director

Souix Falls,
South Dakota



New Arboretum Creates Educational Opportunities

The quarry-based community of East Sioux Falls has all but vanished from the bluffs above the Big Sioux River, but the site now houses a 115-acre arboretum. The namesake of the Mary Jo Wegner Arboretum had a dream to create a haven for trees, wetlands, gardens and native plants, as well as a site to interpret the earlier culture's interaction with the environment.

With funding from private sources and the South Dakota Division of Conservation & Forestry, 400 trees were planted. The Sioux Falls city forester assisted in providing care for both new and mature trees in the arboretum.

"We're offering tree and nature educational opportunities that children can't otherwise get in town," says Lori Kiesow, the arboretum's part-time employee.

Even in its infancy, the facility is attracting families, elementary school children and classes from the local technical college and South Dakota State University. Were it not for the support of state and local forestry professionals, Sioux Falls residents would have missed out on this important resource.

"We've seen a wonderful increase in people that come to check on our progress," says Lori. "The trees we've planted will mature, not in our lifetimes, but in the lifetimes of those for whom we began this project – the children."

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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