

# The Faces of Urban Forestry



**Nykia Perez Kibler**  
University librarian



## Trees Make Better Neighbors and Better Neighborhoods

Nykia Perez Kibler was born and raised in Philadelphia. She is passionate about her city and her community. But in her neighborhood there is “a lot of concrete” and “a lot of row homes that go right up to the sidewalks.” Living with a lack of green space is something she thinks has a negative effect on the people. That’s why she decided to do something about it.

In 2007, Nykia attended a workshop offered by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) and it changed her life. She learned not only the importance of street trees but how to set up volunteer tree planting projects. With the help of two other residents, Nykia formed PhillyTreePeople, an organization that organizes volunteers to plant trees in their neighborhoods. Over 1,000 trees have been planted since 2007 thanks to U.S. Forest Service funds awarded through the Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society.

“For me, it is essential to have green space in our cities,” says Nykia. “We just need to make that happen. This is one way I can make a difference.”

The difference Nykia is making is also being seen in other volunteers and neighbors. People are getting to know each other and becoming more active in their neighborhoods.

“Aside from the immediate visual impact,” says Nykia, “the tree plantings bring people of all ages and abilities together. The volunteers do it to improve the lives of other people...I think attitudes change about how they can help their neighborhood and about how they relate to neighbors when they participate in these events.”

“Events such as tree plantings help instill a sense of pride among neighbors and get people more engaged with what is going on in their neighborhood.”

— Nykia Perez Kibler



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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](http://arborday.org/faces)