

The Faces of Urban Forestry



Raya Marrujo
Home health aide



Las Vegas,
New Mexico

A Lost Life Gives New Life to Park

The small park in James Marrujo's neighborhood was pretty barren, but it was a place to play and hang out as he grew up. When a tragic traffic accident took his life, the young man's family wanted to do something to memorialize him and improve their community.

The city's Public Facilities and Parks Divisions, Cub Scouts and a local nursery worked with the family to provide swings, benches and other facilities and to plant 60 trees where James once played. They also renamed the site: James Marrujo Park.

"The trees have brought the whole neighborhood together. People spend time there, relaxing and playing and getting to know their neighbors. It's a safe haven for kids and they respect the park now. They respect the trees, too," says James' sister, Raya Marrujo. "With the trees, it's a beautiful park. It's a place for picnics and birthday parties. My niece takes her babies there and I go nearly every day," she adds.

In this New Mexico community, trees have enhanced healthful recreation for all ages and are a source of community cooperation and pride.

“There was nothing for kids to do in the neighborhood. Now I see them playing in the park all the time.”

— Raya Marrujo



The Faces of Urban Forestry

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