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PRESS RELEASE

City forms new urban forest advocacy group

Missoula's street trees aren't just beautiful; they're also hard-working: they scrub greenhouse gasses from the air, they filter pollutants from rainwater and run-off, they reduce cooling and heating costs, and they dampen the noise of our busy urban life. Friends of the Urban Forest, a newly formed advocacy group, is dedicated to preserving Missoula's street trees and planting more trees throughout the city.

The new group, sponsored by Missoula Parks and Recreation's Urban Forestry Division, will focus on planting and maintaining trees in boulevards, parks, and public spaces. "Friends of the Urban Forest's mission is to improve our City's environment, build community and connect Missoulians with the natural world and with each other," says Parks and Recreation Director Donna Gaukler. "Citizens truly value the urban forest and ask us frequently what they can do to help. This new organization provides a framework for citizens to take an active role in maintaining Missoula's reputation as "The Garden City."

Through education, outreach and stewardship, Friends of the Urban Forest (FUF) will also help educate citizens about the importance of trees in an urban environment and about how to care for trees.

Members of the City Council agree that the urban forest needs community support. "The urban forest is something everybody appreciates but doesn't think about too much. We're looking for some creative ideas about how to take care of our urban forest. We hope it's an action-based group, with members who are willing to get out there to help water and plant trees," says Ward 6 Council member Marilyn Marler.

The new group's projects and priorities will be member-directed, says City of Missoula Urban Forester Ben Carson. "It will be interesting to see what projects the group chooses to undertake. The great thing about community-based advocacy groups like Friends of the Urban Forest is that the projects are determined by the folks doing the work." FUF will include jobs for just about every interest. Members can choose to focus on tree care and tree planting, public education and outreach, school presentations, photography and the arts, creative and marketing, programs and special events, or management and fundraising support.

Friends of the Urban Forest is looking for a diverse group of people who share a passion for enhancing and maintaining Missoula's trees—no forestry or technical background is required. FUF is not an advisory board, and its' members are not expected to shape policy, provide technical expertise, or advise the City regarding urban forestry activities and programs. Meeting dates and times will be determined after the group is formed. Both City and County residents are welcome. Citizens can find more information and an application at www.missoulaparks.org, at Currents Aquatics Center, or by phoning 721-PARK. Members can join at any time; however, those who join before April 15, 2011 will become the founding members of FUF.

Citizens can learn more about FUF, and the Urban Forest, at the 19th annual Run For The Trees 5k Fun Run on Saturday, April 2, at 10 a.m. The event will feature a "Green Fair" with presentations by local businesses, proclamation and awards with Mayor John Engen, plus a free tree seedling for all runners and walkers. Register by March 31 at www.active.com or Currents Aquatics Center.

(end)

Media Note: We encourage you to cover Run For the Trees on April 2. Over 600 runners and walkers are expected.

Race starts at 9 a.m. (1-mile), 5k at 10 a.m.

Awards ceremony starts at 11a.m.

More details below.

- Booths
 - Nature's Enhancement
 - National Forest Foundation
 - Forest Service
 - Cara's Nursery
 - Able Tree Service
- Presenters:
 - Mayor John Engen, Proclamation/awards
 - Rob Etheridge, DNRC (Presenting Missoula with the Tree City award)
- Race participants receive:
 - A tree sapling from P&R, Forest Service or Nature's Enhancement
 - Monte Dolack, Run for the Trees T-Shirt
 - A Taco John chip for a free taco
 - A 20% off REI gift certificate
 - Apples, oranges & bananas from Orange St. Food Farm
 - An Odwalla bar
 - Snacks from Valley Vending
- Door Prizes from:
 - Good Food Store, \$50
 - Westside Lanes, 20 free game of bowling certificates
 - Crazy Mikes, 3 \$20 gift certificates
 - Doc's, 3 \$10 gift certificates
 - Subway, 20 free – 6 inch subs
 - Pink Grizzly, 20 - \$10 gift certificates
 - Able Tree Service, 5 - \$100 gift certificates
 - Bitterroot Nursery, \$20 gift certificate