

We Plant it Forward
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PROFILE

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A SMALL SEED OF VISION GROWS THROUGHOUT THE CITY

Leaders come in many different forms, embodying unique characteristics that equip them for challenges as well as celebrations. Maggie Bailey is the founder and executive director of We Plant it Forward, a nonprofit organization striving to restore and preserve the environment. She exemplifies passion, dedication, a servant heart, leadership, creativity, a helpful hand and a community mindset. These qualities have not only enabled her to accomplish positive change through We Plant it Forward, but they also have assisted her with building a long-lasting community within the area.

The Beginning

The story began when Maggie was inspired to give back to her community. She desired to serve others but did not know which direction to focus her attention. One day, her mentor suggested that she plant trees. With permission, Maggie began digging up tree seedlings in her neighbors' yards, emailing friends and families to offer seeds so that they may plant trees too.



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“I continued pursuing this work because I saw a real need to preserve and restore the tree canopy. I learned the incredible and valuable role trees play to keep our ecosystem balanced and healthy,” Bailey said. This sparked the idea that would soon become the nonprofit, We Plant it Forward.

Original Roots

In 2009, Maggie founded We Plant it Forward under a parent organization, the Agni Institute. Finally, in 2021, We Plant it Forward began to operate on its own as a nonprofit corporation, purchasing trees from the North Carolina Forest Service nursery and receiving donations from Project Pando. Her inspiration and passion continue to be driving forces.

“I thought it was important to make tree planting easy and accessible for anyone in the community to do it. That is why we do a lot of tree giveaways. They are easy to plant and have a higher survival success rate than bigger trees,” she said.

As We Plant it Forward continued establishing stronger roots within the Raleigh community, there was greater opportunity for more events, raising awareness and education for environmental sustainability. As the executive director, Maggie carries a high level of responsibility. She networks, connects and partners with corporations, community organizations and schools. She leads the rain barrel workshops and guides volunteers through tree planting events. Additionally, Maggie plans the Raleigh Arbor Day, the organization’s largest event. This unique event displays her creativity, commitment and pursuit of a greener tomorrow. Not only does it produce a close-knit and passionate-

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community, but the Arbor Day event has allowed Maggie's story with We Plant it Forward to continue.

Challenges Faced and Hope to Come

However, as Maggie has continued her efforts to restore and preserve the natural environment, challenges began to develop. She describes two situations affecting the organization's mission. First, shifting from an all-volunteer-run organization to a nonprofit with paid staff has been difficult. Second, navigating the organization's lack of property, creating a reliance and partnership with other organizations to plant trees has been a challenge.

Although these remain present, Maggie hasn't stopped. She continues with her passion, envisioning We Plant it Forward's growth and positive impact expanding. She hopes for financially stable, long-term sustainability. She desires deeper community partnerships as well as an expansion of programs that the organization offers. With volunteer help, Maggie continues to sow the seeds for a sustainable future.

A Greener Tomorrow

"At We Plant it Forward, we rely on volunteers to scale the work we do. If you too are looking to give back, volunteer with us at a tree planting, tree giveaway, a native tree seed collection, our annual Arbor Day festival and more. We have a TREEmendous time", said Bailey. Like Maggie, the story begins with a desire to give back and build a long-lasting community.

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