

# A TREE HERO

JOHN NEUMANN

JONAS ZAHN

The heroes in our comic books wear tights and a cape. Everyday heroes, like John Neumann, don a pair of work boots and bib overalls. A real-life tree-herder, John supervises the city Parks and Forestry Department.

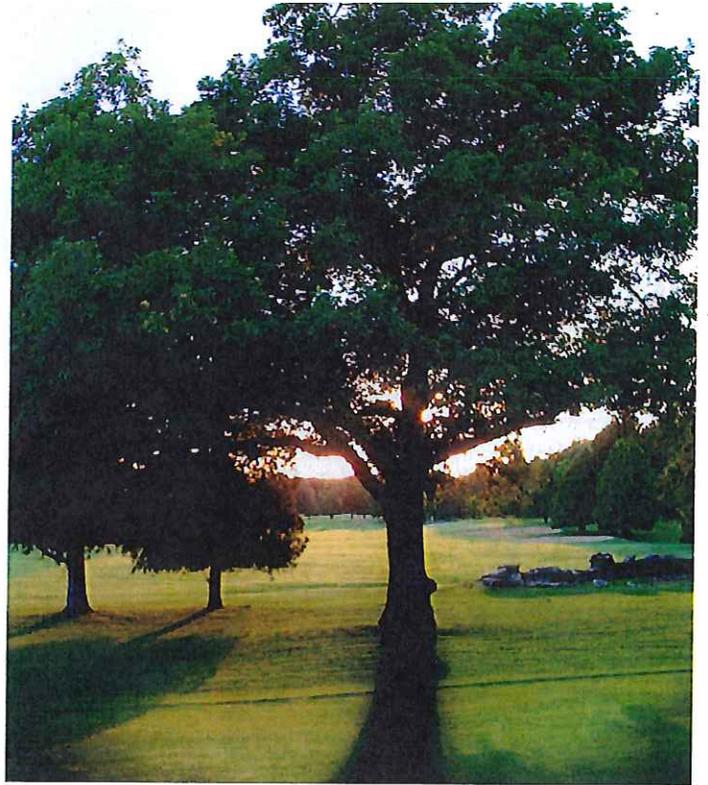
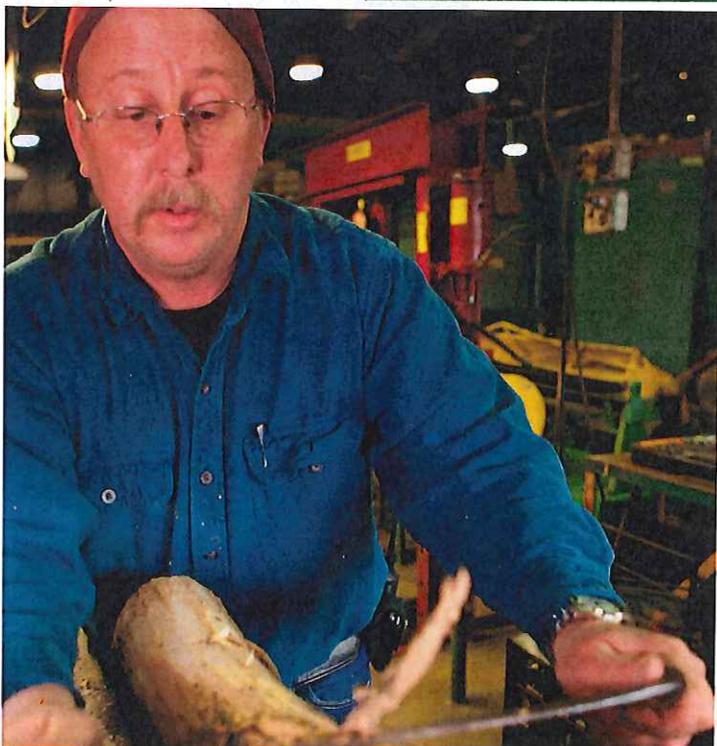
Serving our community since 1997, John has helped plant, nurture and celebrate the trees of Beaver Dam for the last 15 years. Few communities in Wisconsin have a tree population as healthy and diverse as ours. Since 2003, the city has been one of very few cities in Wisconsin to operate its very own tree nursery. Here, John and his staff are able to make a few dollars stretch much further by planting tiny seedlings no larger than a no. 2 pencil until they are 5 years of age and ready to be transplanted around our city. The cost of a seedling is as little as ten cents, whereas a 5-year-old tree costs upwards of \$50. We owe a genuine thank you to John and his team of tree-herders for their commitment to our community of trees.

Annually, John keeps an inventory of the 1240 trees living in our parks taking note of the health, age and species of every tree. At a minimum, John replaces "tree for tree" in the parks as trees fall prey to storm damage, drought or disease. John shares, "We have spent a lot of time in the last 10 years trying to rebuild what was in Swan Park originally by studying old photographs at the Historical Society. I want to be sure our children and grandchildren can continue to enjoy a diverse and healthy tree population throughout Swan Park and the rest of the city."

John Neumann and his staff also know the value of community. Each year they organize and celebrate Arbor Day. John knows the importance of involving the children of our community when it comes to learning the value of trees. John usually involves schoolchildren in Arbor Day events since they will likely be the ones taking care of these trees in the future.

*Shaving Bark off an Ash tree, looking for evidence of Emerald Ash Borer.*

*Photo: Dave Edwards Photography LLC*



Last year, the 4th and 5th graders at Washington Elementary School helped plant trees on the city athletic field across the street from the school. This year John is considering doing a quadruple planting of Japanese Tree Lilacs along Washington Street near the Heffron White House and the parking lot of the new police department. They will grow to be 25-30 feet tall and will bloom every year in June.

Olivia Witthun, the Regional Urban Forestry Coordinator for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, wishes there were more people like John Neumann in the many communities throughout the state. The commitment to a healthy tree population in Beaver Dam is obvious to those who recognize the diversity, placement and health of the trees in Beaver Dam. Thanks in no small part to John and his team, Beaver Dam is an example for other communities to follow. In fact, Olivia comments that Beaver Dam may be one of the only cities in the state that continues to maintain a city nursery to use as an affordable means to provide a continuous healthy crop of new trees ready for planting in the parks and street terraces and around the city.

We can all participate in community events like Arbor Day to celebrate the wonderful wealth of trees in our city. John Neumann welcomes residents to plant trees on their property. "Choose the right tree for the right spot, and then plant it in the right way," John says. He suggests that residents first do their homework to properly choose a species that is appropriate for the location. Tree placement is critical. John recommends you choose a location for the tree and then stand there and look up to ensure that there is enough room for the tree to grow upwards and outwards. Choose a species that will fit nicely into the space you have. Imagine how large the tree will be in 100 years and keep that in mind when you make your choice.

The second critical element to growing a healthy tree is proper planting. Be sure to plant trees at the correct depth. A common mistake is to plant a tree too deep. When a tree is planted too deep, it will grow for 30 years or so and then slowly commit suicide by developing root rot, trunk rot and/or a girdled root system that will slowly strangle it. Unfortunately, there are a lot of trees in the city (mostly maples) that were planted too deep and are now showing signs of distress. They are usually 18 inches wide and 25 feet tall when this starts. The very top leaves on the tree start to die and slowly the rest of the tree follows.

The next time you see John or one of his team members planting, pruning or mulching a tree in one of our parks, say "hello and thank you"

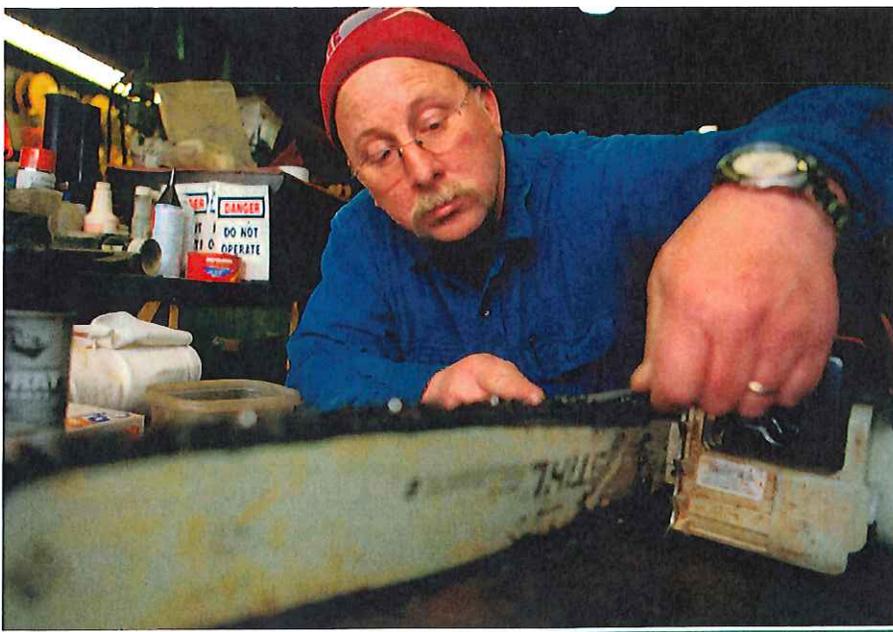


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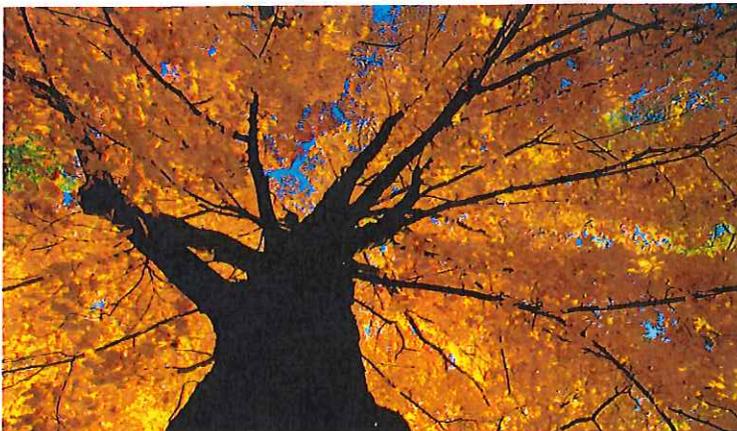
for the many years of dedicated service to our community. As you stroll around town this spring, take a few moments to notice and appreciate the many good trees among us. Our city parks are refuge to more than 1200 trees on 300 acres of land. Another estimated 8000 trees live in the public areas of our community. Add to these the undocumented population of trees living on private lots and there are more trees than people living here in Beaver Dam.

Trees add great wealth to our community. The many species among us bring more than pure aesthetic value to our landscape. Urban trees improve residential property value as much as 23 percent. A single shade tree on the south side of your home can reduce energy consumption by 12%. This saves both money and the environmental impact of energy production. The net cooling effect of a healthy young tree providing shade from the sun and releasing cool water vapor from its leaves is equivalent to ten room-sized air conditioners operating 20 hours a day.

There are several methods that professionals use to appraise the value of trees on residential properties. The assessed value of a healthy adult tree can range from \$1000 to \$10,000. There are few investments we can make with just a few dollars that will yield such a vast return in as few as 15 years. A dollar spent planting a tree is certain to be more valuable next year and every year thereafter.

Trees planted on the terraces of our city streets do not only provide valuable shade; these trees are a strategic investment in reducing storm water run-off, thereby reducing the demand on city drainage and the cost to build and maintain these facilities. A few trees planted in the right places can save tens of thousands of dollars in maintenance over the life of

Photo: Dave Edwards Photography LLC



those trees. Well-planned tree plantings reduce noise pollution along busy streets and the same trees also clean the air we breathe.

Trees are good for people. People have lived with and loved trees for all the ages. Trees have played a part in providing the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter since the earliest time of man on this earth. Here in our community, we continue to depend on trees to provide food, fuel and building material. As with all healthy relationships, our dependence on trees can greatly benefit from a little give and take. The more we give back to trees, the more the trees give back to us. The US Department of Agriculture has calculated that just one acre of forest absorbs six tons of carbon dioxide and puts out four tons of oxygen annually, enough to meet the needs of 18 people.

Trees are good for our health. Laboratory research has shown that people's stress levels respond in as few as five minutes with reduced blood pressure and muscle tension when exposed to settings with trees. Hospital research has also proven that recovery times after surgery accelerate for patients in rooms with a view of healthy living trees.

Trees bring people together to benefit the community. Over the years many of our citizens have organized and socialized as they help plant and care for trees in our community. On April 27th we celebrate Arbor Day here in Beaver Dam. This year, we celebrate 21 years as a Tree City USA. Arbor Day is a springtime celebration of community, of people and of trees. The Arbor Day Foundation, a non-profit organization, seeks to inspire communities to plant, nurture and celebrate trees.

For more information on planting trees and caring for them on your own, go to [www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org).

**We'll Work.  
You Play.**

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