



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**The City of Des Moines, Microsoft, Wright Tree Service and Wright Outdoor Solutions
Invest in New Youth Employment Program
Kick-Off Planting is on Arbor Day (Friday, April 26)**

DES MOINES, Iowa (April 22, 2019)— The City of Des Moines, Microsoft, Wright Tree Service and Wright Outdoor Solutions are investing in a new Trees Forever youth employment program called Growing Futures. Through Growing Futures, Trees Forever will employ and mentor teenagers and young adults as they plant, water and care for the city's trees with a focus on underserved neighborhoods.

At 9 a.m. on Friday, April 26, organizers will celebrate the official kick-off of Growing Futures with a special Arbor Day tree planting. Representatives from the City of Des Moines, Microsoft and Trees Forever will lead students and the first round of Growing Futures participants in a tree planting at Evelyn K. Davis Park on Forest Avenue in Des Moines. Together the group will plant 20 trees.

"Growing Futures is a great opportunity to foster growth for the next generation of young people and the next generation of trees, side-by-side," said David Jahn, City Forester for Des Moines. "Working with Trees Forever has helped the City grow and care for Des Moines' urban tree canopy, and Growing Futures provides the perfect opportunity to engage a new generation of tree-loving residents."

The City of Des Moines has committed \$200,000 annually for the next five years for new trees and watering, and Microsoft, via its Datacenter Community Development initiative, awarded \$100,000 to help launch Growing Futures. Trees Forever must raise a total of \$3.1 million in funds to meet the needs of the program over the next five years.

"We've been working with the City of Des Moines for years as our trained volunteers planted and cared for trees throughout the area. Now, with Growing Futures, we're taking tree planting and care to the next level," said Trees Forever Program Development and Innovation Director Leslie Berckes.

"Thanks to the City of Des Moines and Microsoft for the seed money to grow something much bigger! We continue to reach out to additional partners and funders, such as Wright Outdoor Solutions and Wright Tree Service, who together provided us with a passenger van, watering trailer, uniforms, equipment and tools, to ensure the sustainability of this program. Altec also has helped with the trailer and tools."

Through Growing Futures, teams of seven to ten teenagers and young adults will plant, water and care for the City's trees. While Growing Futures Teammates (GFTs) build job experience, they will also have opportunities to explore green jobs and learn other life skills, such as financial literacy and conflict resolution.

"Microsoft is pleased to partner with Trees Forever and support the Growing Futures program to empower young people and care for trees in Des Moines," said Mike Miles, Microsoft General Manager for Talent, Workforce, and Community Development. "Microsoft aspires to enable a sustainable future by empowering every person and organization on the planet to thrive in a resource-constrained world. Our support for the Growing Futures program is an extension of that commitment."

In the contract with the City of Des Moines, Trees Forever will plant and care for a minimum of 533 trees annually through Growing Futures and with volunteers. For more information on Growing Futures, go to www.TreesForever.org/GrowingFutures or contact Jackie Wedeking by phone at 319-640-0757 or via email at jwedeking@treesforever.org.

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Trees Forever is a nonprofit organization nationally headquartered in Iowa. We are dedicated to planting trees, encouraging volunteer and youth involvement and environmental stewardship. For nearly 30 years, we've been planting a better tomorrow. For more information, visit

www.treesforever.org or call 800-369-1269.