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Project Roots AZ Hosts Tree-Planting Party on February 15

NIKI D'ANDREA ([HTTPS://WWW.PHOENIXMAG.COM/AUTHOR/NDANDREA/](https://www.phoenixmag.com/author/ndandrea/)) | February 14, 2020

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Some Phoenix basketball fans remember Bridget Pettis as a member of the Phoenix Mercury's inaugural squad in 1997, and some may know her now as an assistant coach for the Chicago Sky. What most people may not know is Pettis has a passion for planting trees, growing community gardens and feeding the hungry in the food deserts of Phoenix.

She recently founded the nonprofit grassroots organization Project Roots AZ (<https://www.facebook.com/projectrootsaz>) to educate people about food and empower them to grow their own. "Our mission is to bring healthy living and sustainability to communities in food deserts like South Phoenix," Pettis says. "We'd love to do something in Sunnyslope, too."

On Saturday, February 15, Project Roots AZ aims to plant 200 citrus trees at Spaces of Opportunity (<https://www.facebook.com/SpacesOfOpportunity>) in South Phoenix, where the organization has a quarter-acre space for crops. The orchard project will kick off with tree plantings from 10 a.m. to noon, with music, food and drinks from local vendors to follow.

Volunteers are always needed, Pettis says, along with extra gardening tools, soil, compost and help with irrigation. People can purchase trees to donate at store.urbanfarm.org/treedonation (<https://store.urbanfarm.org/treedonation>).

Pettis, who is from a small town in Indiana called East Chicago, says she decided to start Project Roots AZ in her adopted hometown of Phoenix after seeing how difficult it was for her family back in the Midwest to get access to healthful food. "There are dialysis centers all over!" she says.

"I want to bring the knowledge of what I'm doing here to communities in the Midwest where I am from," Pettis adds. "I want to empower others to feed their families and be healthy."

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