

Keep America Beautiful Merges with RETREET to Focus on Community Restoration and Resiliency Through Tree Planting

STAMFORD, CT, US, November 8, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Keep America Beautiful® is proud to officially announce a merger with RETREET®, the national authority in post-disaster tree planting. The move enables both organizations to work together more closely and efficiently on a new Keep America Beautiful strategic priority: community restoration and resiliency.

Founded in 1953, Keep America Beautiful is the nation's leading community improvement nonprofit organization, focusing on reducing litter, improving recycling, and beautifying communities. As the organization adds RETREET as a flagship program and takes on this new strategic priority, the work done will include both proactive and reactive responses: engaging communities in planting trees to augment tree canopy for environmental protection and rebuilding tree canopy when it is destroyed by natural disasters.



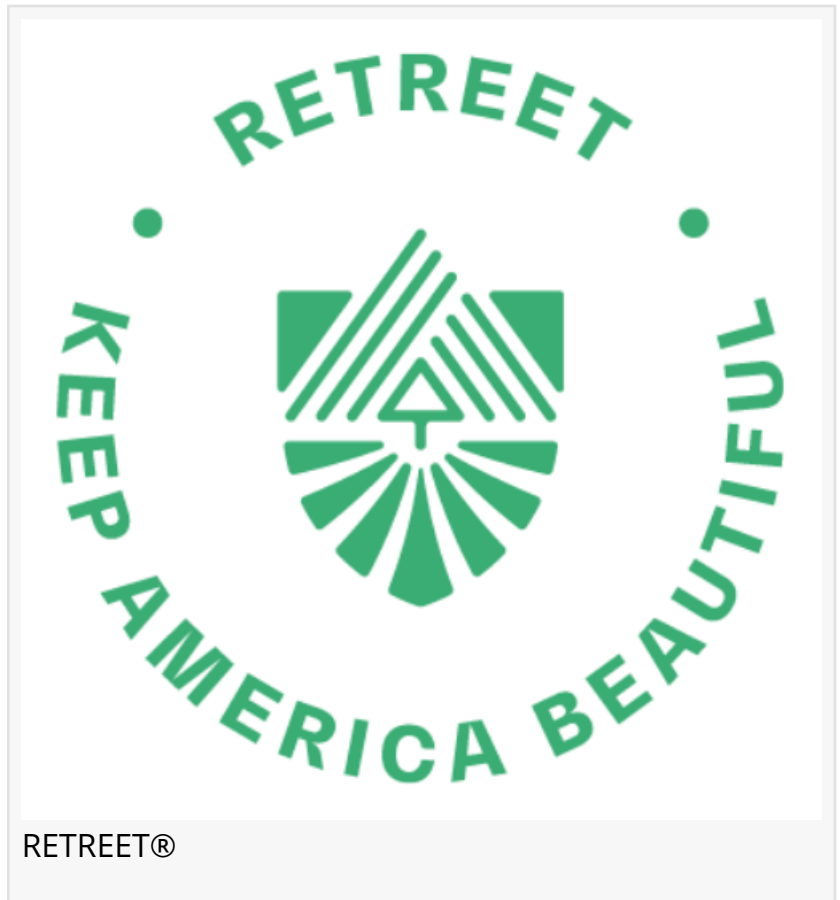
RETREET®



RETREET®

“RETREET's programs are impactful and meaningful at the community level. The Keep America Beautiful 2021-2025 Strategic Plan highlights the importance of the work of RETREET through a focus on community restoration and resiliency,” said Keep America Beautiful President and CEO, Dr. Helen Lowman. “Keep America Beautiful’s RETREET program will lead the way, providing grants and program tools for communities to plant trees in post-disaster communities and plant trees, flowers, shrubs and more in public spaces to mitigate future damage from disasters.”

Founded in 2012 in Texas as a grassroots organization, RETREET became the national authority in post-disaster tree planting through a decade of excellence in the field. KAB and RETREET cooperated directly for two years to increase the planting of trees in communities with a KAB affiliate, including in Kokomo, IN, Port Aransas, TX, and Ruston, LA, among several others. Following these successful partnerships, KAB and RETREET decided to join forces and become a single organization in order to take the RETREET program to scale across KAB's vast and growing affiliate network. This merger brings together complementary strengths of the organizations and offers many benefits to communities around the U.S., including:



- Providing a distinctive, hands-on tree planting experience for those who wish to volunteer in the wake of disaster
- Empowering donors to make a unique, long-term investment in devastated communities
- Coordinating diverse stakeholders to re-establish their environmental identity and learn about the importance of trees in their community
- Curating engaging programs that educate the public about the environmental, economic, and emotional impact of community restoration and resiliency
- Addressing the growing extent of need

The Founder and Executive Director of RETREET is Grady McGahan, who now joins the Keep America Beautiful team as the Director of RETREET, along with a couple of RETREET's board members. McGahan is a 2015 graduate of Municipal Forestry Institute, the past-president of the Texas Urban Forestry Council, an at-large commissioner for the City of Dallas' Arts & Culture Advisory Commission, the chair of the city's Public Art Committee, and a board member of the Trinity River Audubon Center.

"The RETREET program addresses an often-overlooked part of the recovery process. Trees are destroyed alongside infrastructure and housing in every natural disaster," says McGahan. "Planting new trees brings life back to a neighborhood and produces an immense psychological impact by making unfamiliar, decimated landscapes feel like home again."

Typically, there are very few resources available to do this unique work within the community. Most people struggling through the disaster recovery process do not have time, energy, or funds required to replace their lost trees and, furthermore, do not know which trees should be planted where, or when is best to do so. Yet, of everything lost, mature trees are what will take the longest to replace.

An October 2020 report by the United Nations notes a disturbing trend that natural disasters are occurring with greater frequency—3x more often than 50 years ago—and, unfortunately, with greater intensity and complexity, affecting more and more people. Given this, the time to focus on community restoration and resiliency is now.

“The merger of Keep America Beautiful and RETREET creates an incredible opportunity for us to spread a successful program, crafted and honed over a decade in the field across a vast, established network of community improvement organizations,” says McGahan.

Better Together Fund, a program to drive large-scale social change by supporting nonprofits that come together in formal collaboration for a common purpose as a way to maximize impact, funded the merger of the two organizations through a series of grants for planning and implementation.

Learn more: <https://kab.org/programs/retreet/>

About Keep America Beautiful

Keep America Beautiful®, the nation’s leading community improvement nonprofit organization, inspires and educates people to “take action” every day to improve and beautify their community environment. Established in 1953, Keep America Beautiful strives to End Littering, Improve Recycling, and Beautify America’s Communities. We believe everyone has a right to live in a clean, green, and beautiful community, and shares a responsibility to contribute to that vision. The organization is driven by the work and passion of nearly 700 Keep America Beautiful affiliates, millions of volunteers, and the collaborative support of corporate partners, social and civic service organizations, academia, municipalities, elected officials, and individuals. Join us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Donate and “take action” at kab.org.

About RETREET

RETREET® is a flagship program of KAB that redefines disaster relief by engaging communities to replant lost trees. To date, the program has brought 5,953 trees to thousands of families recovering from natural disasters in 21 different communities across North America. There is no other agency focused on this unique, important, and underrepresented part of the hands-on recovery process. As such, the RETREET program has become the national standard in this work.

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