

## Preface

### *Opening the door to our local forests*

*Getting involved takes attitude as well as action... Civic participation depends on a set of attitudes that includes believing in mutual obligations to one another, believing that people acting together can improve their communities, and believing that citizens have a personal responsibility to help make their own communities better.*

– excerpt from “Getting Involved”  
California Center for Life Improvement

**I**n January, 1998, I met Ray Tretheway, the Executive Director of the Sacramento Tree Foundation. He introduced me to an enlightening new concept: We all live in an *urban forest*. I went home stunned. I was passionate about the forests in the Sierra and committed to building strong communities. I had never imagined my community existed within a forest!

After two years with the Tree Foundation, I have learned time and again it is our imagination that brings our richest opportunities. Despite my best intentions to remain positive and open-minded, I often get stuck explaining that worthwhile projects cannot be done because I do not have time, we have tried something like that before, or people are not interested. In fact, many reasons have been suggested for NeighborWoods' inevitable failure.

I have seen the success of NeighborWoods. I have seen in every community people joining together and working toward a common vision. I have seen neighbors surprised by the satisfaction and appreciation that develops when caring for their forest. And this success waits just outside our front doors.

This Guidebook is an invitation to actively honor and enhance your neighborhood. It is about learning and teaching others. This book is about communicating. This book is about caring. The choice is yours.

Step into your forest today. Discover your NeighborWoods. Take action to affect our world today and our children's world tomorrow.

– M.S.  
April 1, 2000