

MIZZOU

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[Home](#) » [Summer 2009](#) » [Alumni Profiles](#) » [Giving for gardening](#)

Alumni Profile

Giving for gardening

As the founder of Real Estate Management Inc. (REMI), Mark Stevenson owns much land in Columbia, but he doesn't *own* it.

"I'm part Cherokee," says Stevenson, BGS '90, JD '00. "Cherokees don't believe that you can really own land. You can live on it and you can use it, but you have a responsibility to it."



Mark Stevenson donates vacant plots of land to community gardens in Columbia.

To fulfill his responsibility and help preserve the earth, Stevenson donates vacant plots to the local Community Garden Coalition and to [Sustain Mizzou](#), a student organization that promotes sustainability on campus and in the community. His donations have provided land for four community gardens — the Ash Street, Benton-Stephens, Circus-Lyons and Ninth Street gardens — and the [Sustain Mizzou Research Farm](#), located on the corner of St. Joseph and Ash streets.

"So often now we separate ourselves from other people and from nature, both to our detriment," Stevenson says. "When people come out to garden in these areas, they get to know each other, and pretty soon it's a safer, healthier community."

A number of studies from the past 10 years cite the positive effects of community gardening, which include the opportunity to connect with neighbors, to organize with the purpose of addressing local problems such as crime, and to promote health, nutrition and physical activity.

"I think it's important for everyone to do what they can," Stevenson says. "Everybody can

contribute something, even if it's time or picking up litter. People are hungry for healthy activities." — *Sarah Garber*

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