



GIVING BACK

Georgia Landscapers Take Philanthropy Outside

In metro Atlanta, the outdoor service industry is sharing its time and talent to create meaningful outdoor spaces for local nonprofits.

Founded in 2021, Take It Outside brings outdoor service professionals together across multiple sectors, skill sets, nationalities and cultures. Throughout the year, members meet to network, share best practices and give back—from designing to building vegetable gardens for kids to creating therapeutic outdoor spaces for men facing addiction and mental health challenges.

The idea for Take It Outside was fittingly formed outdoors by a couple of friends on a hunting trip. “As we shared stories around the fire of projects and services related to our industry, I realized the friends who came together that day could design, build, repair and service any need that was part of an outdoor project,” says Randall Tolbert, founder of Take It Outside.

Randall, who has spent his career creating

and growing companies like FiveTraks, Maxwell Landscape Construction and Yardsy, saw launching an outdoors-based nonprofit organization as a natural fit. He asked Zach Coward to be the executive director and Tara Potts to be the CFO. Together, they launched Take It Outside.

“Successful companies are always built on a foundation of core values that drive positive, steady momentum, & it’s the same for a nonprofit.”



In just three years, Take It Outside has grown to more than 400 members from dozens of companies, including landscape professionals, business owners, skilled laborers and industry equipment and chemical suppliers, as well as supporting services such as investment banks, insurance companies and law firms.

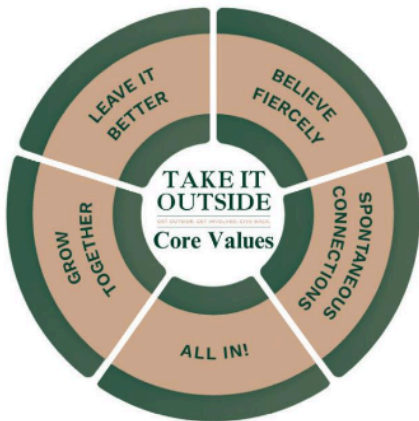
Free to join, Take It Outside offers a series of community service projects and engaging social events, ranging from golf tournaments to pheasant shoots driven by Event Coordinator Lindsey Morris.

“Some of our members may not have played golf before or gone hunting

before, and we're going to make sure they have that experience," says Randall.

“It’s all about having fun, coming together as an industry & learning to give back.”

Take It Outside volunteers have completed two community projects to date and are already working on several more. Tolbert says any nonprofit needing to build or enhance a landscape that encourages outdoor activity can apply, but they are especially seeking organizations that align with their core values.



“We’re looking to partner with organizations that are encouraging people to get outside,” he says. “The more you’re outside, the better it is for your mental health. You go outside and your heart rate drops, and your anxiety is lessened. You’re no longer in an environment of stress.”

Take It Outside recently completed a project at No Longer Bound in Cumming, Georgia, a residential treatment facility for men facing addiction. Joe Guida with LandCare LLC served as the project ▶



captain. More than 20 companies and over 60 volunteers with Take It Outside designed and installed a therapeutic garden for families to reunite and for patients to find peace and respite during their recovery.

“The project was valued at \$107,000, but No Longer Bound didn't have to fund it,” says Randall. “We built it for them, so they could focus on helping their patients—and the work they do is amazing.”

In 2023, Take It Outside worked with Soccer in the Streets, a nonprofit organization that gives all kids in metro Atlanta the opportunity to play soccer. The first of its kind in the world, the organization's StationSoccer program has installed soccer fields at five public transit stations. For the West End MARTA station, Dexter Maxwell, president of Maxwell Landscape Construction LLC, served as the project captain. Take It Outside installed drainage systems, accessible ramps and a community vegetable garden to improve the space and enhance the experience of the players and their families.

The process for each Take It Outside community project begins with the design phase, typically led by a landscape architect. The second phase is the project launch, where a volunteer captain determines the scope of work and any supplies, permits,

legal assistance and labor needed. The captain then recruits volunteers based on skill set and raises funds as needed. The final phase is construction day, when all the volunteers work together on site to complete the project.

Randall says the finished product is always rewarding not just for the nonprofit, but the volunteers as well.

“It's not about writing a big check, it's about giving back by doing the work.”



Randall says the projects are also a fantastic way for members to display their skills and build their portfolios. “Our community projects are professionally done. We are doing cutting-edge, innovative things in the outdoor service industry and exceeding expectations.”

For the future, Randall would love to see additional chapters of Take It Outside open around the state and country. “The bigger we get, the more nonprofits we can partner with,” he says, “and the more projects we can do to encourage more people to get outside.”



At Take It Outside, we use our strong **community** ties to organize and take part in service projects that benefit local **partner organizations**. From revitalizing rundown public spaces to creating new and useful gardens, our **projects** are designed to help individuals cope with anxiety and other **mental health** challenges.

Join here: [TakeItOutside.org](https://www.TakeItOutside.org)

