

# Illinois Trees

The Quarterly Publication of the Illinois Arborist Association



## Urban Forest Strike Team: Ottawa, IL

My phone rang on the morning of May 31<sup>st</sup> from a number I didn't recognize, with a 217 area code. Somewhere downstate, I thought to myself, and promptly answered. The call was from our esteemed colleague and long-time IAA mentor Reinee Hildebrandt, from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). She was calling to inform me that due to recent tornado damage down in Ottawa, IL, an Illinois Urban and Community Forestry Strike Team was being assembled for deployment to assess the damage. Would I be willing to assist? Of course. As long as the boss would let me get away for a few days (and he would, thankfully!).

Some of you might be asking yourselves "What is the Urban Forestry Strike Team?" right now. I know my wife certainly did, as did the guys in the blues band I play in on the weekends. When I told them I couldn't make a gig because I'd be out of town on the Urban Forestry Strike Team, our harmonica player asked me "what is that, like being a sniper up in a tree or something?". Not quite, but not far off, either! The Illinois Urban Community Forestry Strike Team is a highly skilled and trained volunteer group of Arborists who get deployed to Illinois natural disaster sites in order to assess the level of Risk posed by damaged trees. We also gather information about those trees so that decisions can be made quickly and efficiently as to whether or not to prune, remove, or otherwise treat them to mitigate Risk. We may also evaluate tree debris left over from storms, depending on the specific site, so that we account for what the cleanup costs are for natural disasters such as this.

The Illinois Urban Community Forestry Strike Team Initiative is modeled after the USDA Forest Service's Urban Forestry Strike Team. This Ottawa deployment used the original USDA Forest Service Strike Team class which was trained in Carpentersville in 2014 (in a partnership with USDA Forest Service, IDNR and IAA) as it's pool of Strike Team Specialists. For this state-level deployment to Ottawa, IDNR took the lead in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service and Trees Forever (a nonprofit organization). Effectively, what our team did was to work in pairs of Specialists and thoroughly walk the affected areas of town. We evaluated trees in the public right of way using GPS handheld devices, and record the level of Risk they posed, and how to effectively mitigate that Risk by either pruning, removal, or other means. This was the first ever such effort in the state of Illinois, and the first in the Northeast region.



In the case of Ottawa (and nearby Naplate, IL), late the afternoon of February 28<sup>th</sup>, during an odd early season warmup, the tornado sirens began to sound. An EF-3 tornado, one of 4 tornadoes in the area that day, had touched ground and was tearing through the Illinois River valley. EF-3 tornadoes have wind speeds of 130-165 miles per hour, and can cause severe damage such as "...Entire stories of well-constructed houses destroyed; severe damage to large buildings such as shopping malls; trains overturned; trees debarked; heavy cars lifted off the ground and thrown; structures with weak foundations are badly damaged." (National Weather Service). And that's exactly what happened here. This tornado was 800 yards wide: 8 football fields of 160+ mile per hour winds swirling around with enough force to tear the bark off trees.

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Don't forget  
to sign up for  
the upcoming  
IAA Annual  
Conference &  
Trade Show.

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## Illinois Arborist Association Mission Statement

*"Foster interest, establish standards, exchange professional ideas  
and pursue scientific research in Arboriculture"*

# President's Message

Jim Semelka

Dear Illinois Arborist Association Members,

In a continuing effort to make the benefits of IAA membership accessible to all our members Statewide and to highlight careers in Arboriculture for college students in related fields, the IAA Summer Conference was held on May 25th at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center in Simpson, IL. Operated by the University of Illinois since 1934, the Center is an outdoor laboratory of over 5,000 acres located in the Shawnee National Forest, and is the largest experiment station of its kind east of the Mississippi River. This makes the Center an ideal location for the outdoor, hands-on program format that our Summer Conference emphasizes. The one-day Summer Conference was preceded by a two-day Student Forestry Field Days event on May 23rd and 24th, in cooperation with the Center and the Forestry Department of Southern Illinois University. The Field Days event was attended by 34 SIU Forestry students as part of their Summer Camp, and offered many participants their first exposure to safe and proper chain saw operation and maintenance, tree climbing, felling, and pruning techniques, as well as equipment operation and PPE training. These same topics were covered at a more advanced level for the professionals attending the Summer Conference following the Field Days. Trainers and instructors for both events were provided by the Davey Tree Expert Company, Meurer Brothers Tree Care Professionals of Belleville, IL, the University of Illinois, and the SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative. The IAA would like to thank Chris Evans and Jay Hayek of the U of I, Mark Noark and Eduardo Medina of the Davey Tree Expert Company, Roger Smith and Mike McMahan of the Illinois Forestry Association, and Jeff Crisp of the SEIEC, Gene Meurer, Jeremy Dunivan and Chris Slago from Meurer Brothers, for all of their time, hard work, and spirit of volunteerism in making these events a success. A big thanks to all our sponsors, Altenburg Hardwood, DJM Ecological, Davey Tree Expert Company, K & K Supply, Midwest Arborist Supplies, Rainbow Treecare Scientific, SouthEastern Coop, and the University of Illinois.

Planning for the IAA Annual Conference and Trade Show in Tinley Park on October 17th and 18th are well under way, and many sponsors, speakers, and vendors have already confirmed their participation. Look for some program changes in this year's Fall Conference centered around our Awards Program, Tree Fund Raffle, and Reception formats. As always, we welcome comments, suggestions, ideas for the program that will meet the needs of our membership, and provide you with the most rewarding and informative program we can offer. Take time to meet someone you don't yet know at this year's event, and take full advantage of all the Conference has to offer.

Thank you,  
Jim Semelka





## Urban Forest Strike Team: Ottawa, IL. (continued from page 1)

When all was said and done, the tornado had caused severe property damage totaling in the tens of millions of dollars, injured 14 people, and tragically resulted in a fatality as well. It's at times like these that thoughts about how much worse it could have been start to creep into your mind, but let's be clear and blunt about this: It was bad. Really bad. But residents banded together, and the town pooled its manpower and resources together starting that evening, and began to rebuild. How many of you came down here to help? From what I know, it was darn near everybody. Private companies, municipal foresters, and every guy who could drag a branch, swing a saw, or use a rake came down to pitch in, and they did a first class job of getting streets drivable, homes livable, and the community back to something resembling normal.

There are 3 phases to every disaster relief effort: The initial phase where enough must get done to make the area livable again. For Arborists, this was getting trees out of the road and off of homes and powerlines. Next comes the phase where the secondary damage is taken care of. This is the effort that many Arborists participated in as mentioned previously. Finally comes the phase we were involved with, which was the rebuilding phase. Here, we can see that the most dangerous trees have been removed, but what about those that were left to stand? How bad is that trunk split or exposed heartwood, and are there still hangers 60 feet up in a tree that got missed when handling more critical operations, such as restoring power? We needed to make the final determination on which trees would remain as long term trees, which trees required pruning or other maintenance in order to be long term trees, and which trees simply required removal.

In addition, through cooperation with TCIA and IAA, we were identifying trees on private property which required maintenance, so that a Day of Service could be coordinated. The Strike Team was there to assess trees on publicly owned property such as parkways and parks, but very soon Arborists working on a volunteer basis will make their way down to assist homeowners with trees on their property which may be above their financial means to recuperate from. Especially after having to rebuild their homes, purchase a new car, or any other of the hardships many have faced in the aftermath of this terrible storm. Please contact IAA or TCIA to register to volunteer!



Over the course of 4 days, the Strike Team headquartered at City Hall, which served as our Command Center for the week, where we held daily briefings, safety meeting, and debriefings. A lot of phenomenal conversation was sparked during these sessions about the overall level of Risk posed by trees, and how team members were evaluating certain defects and public safety concerns. Public outreach was also an important part of our campaign. We were all able to share our daily experiences, and learn from each other's past experience, and specific experience out in the field. We were also under the expert tutelage of The US Forest Service's John Parry, who coordinates the Federal US Forest Service Strike Team program, and provides education and leadership throughout the country. I think we all left after these 4 days as better Arborists, and probably better people. It was both educational and humbling to be involved in an effort such as this.



So how can you get involved with this program? When enough interest is generated, a Strike Team Specialist Training Course is coordinated with IDNR, the US Forest Service, and IAA. During this 2-day course, you learn many things: First, you learn FEMA's Incident Command Program, which teaches you how disaster relief is organized for any major disaster, regardless of whether you're a firefighter, paramedic, or Arborist. Then, you go on to learn the basics of Tree Risk Assessment, based on the ISA's TRAQ program and ANSI A300 Pt 9 Standards. Training is also provided on handheld GPS units for field data collection, and how to manage that data. Finally, you go out into the field and perform a mock relief effort, with Strike Teams communicating and working with each other so that they are experienced in the event of a real disaster. Please contact Reinee Hildebrandt at IDNR to express interest to create a future training session, and become a Strike Team Specialist!



## Urban Forest Strike Team: Ottawa, IL. (continued from page 4)

In conclusion, the Illinois Urban Community Forestry Strike Team is a rewarding program to be a part of. Even if you are never deployed to an actual disaster, the training alone is priceless, and provides an excellent overview of Tree Risk Assessment, tree data collection, how to work as a team, and also provides invaluable networking opportunities. And if you ever find yourself on the other end of the phone when the call comes in to go on a deployment, I highly recommend that you get out there and help some folks out with your skills and knowledge, learn from your fellow Arborists, and have a unique experience that will change your perspective on what we do and why we do it.

I would like to Acknowledge the Ottawa, IL Urban Community Forestry Strike Team Members:

**Mike Sutfin – City of Ottawa Building and Zoning**  
**Mary Kaczmarek – City of Ottawa GIS**  
**Barb Garner-Kearns – Trees Forever**  
**Reinee Hildebrandt – IL Dep’t of Natural Resources**  
**Charlie Foor – IL Dep’t of Natural Resources**  
**Clint Meyer – Oswegoland Park District**  
**Tom Green – Western Illinois University**  
**Theresa Hicks – Tree Specifics Consulting**

**Matt Stafford – City of Ottawa Engineering**  
**Debbie Flugel – Trees Forever**  
**John Parry – US Forest Service**  
**Sravya Pamulapati – IL Dep’t Natural Resources**  
**Jerome Scott – Chicago Park District**  
**Paul D’Agostino – City of Evanston**  
**Steve Lane – Graf Tree Care**



# IAA Golf Outing at St. Andrews

It was an unseasonable cold and drizzly day for a golf outing! However, it was nice to not deal with the extreme heat of August or the bugs. St. Andrews golf course was beautiful and I can imagine that the weather would mimic that of the British Open. We had a great turn out with 72 golfers. The food and fellowship always make this a fun event to participate in.

This year's raffle was awesome thanks to Rick Korjenek, who was able to secure a lot of great prizes, i.e., Cubs and Sox tickets, golf bags and plenty of adult beverage prizes! A special thanks to Mark Simon for securing the hole sponsors!

## A big thank you to our sponsors:

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### ***Raffle donors:***

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Please visit pages 13 & 14 to view images of the prize and hole winners.



## 2017 IAA Tree Climbing Championship Results

This year's Tree Climbing Championship was held at Salt Creek Forest Preserve and it started out with intermittent torrential rain. The Tree Climbing Championship is meant to mimic what tree workers have to deal with every day in the field, and yes, some days it rains. However, our competitors were still excited to compete. As the day progressed the walking paths between the events became mud slides but it didn't stop the spectators from cheering on their favorite climbers. At one point, we heard thunder and had to take a 20-minute break and it was well needed to warm up and dry off a bit. As we approached the Master Challenge the weather began to let up. After the competition was complete and the awards were handed out, the sun came out and it was beautiful! The winners of the competition will represent the Illinois Chapter in the International competition taking place in Washington DC on July 29 & 30. We were excited to have two women compete again, they both did excellent! As always, the Kramer Tree Specialists crew came out and cooked a great lunch!



**Brandon Dobnick, Alex Julius, Jeremy Dunivan, Felicia Speranske, Beau Nagen**



**First Place Winners: Beau Nagen and Felicia Speranske**



# IAA Tree Climbing Championship Results (continued from page 7)

## 2017 winners for the Men's Division:

**1st Place:** Beau Nagan

**2nd Place:** Jeremy Dunivan

**3rd Place:** Brandon Dobnick



Jeremy Dunivan, Beau Nagen and Brandon Dobnick

## 2017 winners for the Women's Division:

**1st Place:** Felicia Speranske

**2nd Place:** Alex Julius



Alex Julius and Felicia Speranske

A special thanks to Kramer Tree Specialists for feeding all the contestants, judges and spectators!

Thanks to North Branch Tree Climb who hosted the kids climb.

**All event sponsors:** Davey and The Care of Trees

## Event Sponsors:

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## Master Challenge prizes donated by:

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# IAA Summer Conference in Dixon Springs

This year's summer conference was held at the University of Illinois Dixon Springs Ag Center which is a giant outdoor laboratory for conducting large-scale experiments. It is the largest experiment station of its kind east of the Mississippi River. Dixon Springs is located in the heart of the Shawnee National Forest which provided a great venue for this year's conference! We had a great line up of speakers that covered tree worker topics. It was an exciting day with lots of demonstrations and hands on opportunities, it was a priceless experience.

Keeping Safe with PPE had a special demonstration with our pretend arborist wearing Chainsaw Protective Chaps. These chaps are designed to stop the chain on your moving gas-powered chainsaw if it were to accidentally come in contact with your leg.



The chainsaw refresher course is a must whether you are a novice or an experienced sawyer, it covered safety features, proper starting and some maintenance. Jay Hayek and Chris Evans went over various saws and safety.

Open-face bore cut method for tree felling was a demonstration that got everyone out into the field to watch as Chris Evans dropped a tree using this technique.

Chris Evans gave a field tour to identify common and upcoming invasive species in Southern Illinois and discuss control techniques.

Other topics like Work Positioning for Proper Pruning –Getting the Best Results for the Right Cut; Safety, Ropes and Gear Inspection;

*Illinois Trees*



Student Group

Trimming near Utility Lines all stressed the importance of safety.

We had an awesome BBQ lunch that we got from the Backwoods BBQ in Paducah KY. Attendees could stay in the dormitory located at the Ag center, each room was decorated with a different tree species.



## Mini Trade Show vendors:

K & K Supply  
Midwest Arborist Supplies  
Rainbow Tree Care Scientific  
TCIA



(continued on page 10)

# IAA Summer Conference in Dixon Springs

(continued from page 9)

## Thank you Summer Conference Sponsors:

U of I Extension  
SouthEastern IL Electric Coop  
Midwest Arborist Supplies  
Rainbow Tree Care



Special thanks to Roger Smith, Chris Evans, Jay Hayak, Peggy Drescher, Eduardo Medina, Jeff Crisp, and Meurer Brothers for making this one of the best summer conferences!

Some of the other improperly perceived “little things” that I have observed arborists doing from time to time include:

- Improper or no PPE
  - Safety glasses hanging from the shirt, or the helmet visor/eye shield worn up while working and not wearing safety glasses
  - Damaged, excessively dirty or ill-fitting chaps (chain saw leg protection)
- Drop-starting chain saws
- One-handing chain saws
- Improper TTC (Temporary Traffic Control) setup
- Wrong license for drivers
  - Wrong class of CDL for vehicle/combination
  - Medical card expired, never issued or not carried with the driver
- Reaching into the chipper
- Walking/working in the drop zone
- Working too close to power lines (violating MAD)

Each of the preceding unsafe “little things” has increased the risk exposure and is leading to an incident if the behaviors are not observed, identified and corrected by a co-worker, a supervisor, or a safety professional. These course corrections are an act of professional caring for the person and incident prevention and not a way to annoy or harass the workers involved.

I love to catch people doing it right, as I mentioned at the beginning of this article. I know I have done this when:

- I pull up on the job site and all the signs and cones are placed properly (based on the MUTCD and conditions)
- I see two wheel chocks placed properly (against the tires and one on each side unless there is a slope)
- I see everyone using PPE

And I see that as soon as someone sees me, they stop and bring me the job briefing form (which is filled out correctly) to personally brief me and then to have me review and sign the briefing form.

If they have these details right, the rest of their operation tends to be spot on. Focusing on getting the details right is a behavior of a “safety leader” who knows that often it is a single or series of small defenses that, if not properly in place, can lead to a near miss, and/or ultimately to an incident with injury or damage.

So the safety leader, as all arborists should, will take the steps to do it right with his/her crew today and into a successful future. My time is usually spent working with the crews, often training on some advanced technique, or just making some minor tweaks to the operation so it can be a little safer, more productive and efficient.

If we focus on the little things, and get them right every time, the big things will likely be taken care of in the process.



# Calendar of Events

## September 7th

Rockford Arborist Certification, Municipal Specialist, Utility Specialist Exams

## September 11th

Downers Grove Arborist Certification, Municipal Specialist, Utility Specialist Exams

## September 13th

Evanston Arborist Certification Workshop

## September 16

Aerial Lift Specialist Class in West Chicago

## September 20

Lombard Arborist Certification Workshop

## September 21

Northeast Municipal Foresters Meeting – Bur Oak Blight (BOB) Tour. BOB, causal agent *Tubakia iowensis*, is a severe fungal pest of bur oak, which can kill the tree. First described and observed in Iowa it has been a waiting game for it to come to Northern Illinois. Disease spread is favored by wet conditions in the spring, which we have had the last few years. There is now a lab confirmed case in McHenry County. Come observe the symptoms, learn about the life cycle of the disease, specifics about the host preference, and the most recent management suggestions. We will inspect a cluster of bur oaks in McHenry IL and note the variability in symptom expression from one tree to the next. Address will be forthcoming, starts at 10am ends at 12noon.

## September 23 & 30

Advanced Training Tree Disease classes in Springfield

## September 30

Illinois Tree Climbing Championship  
Lincoln Park in Chicago

## October 16 - 18th

Annual Conference & Trade Show at the  
Tinley Park Convention Center

## November 9th

Northeast Municipal Foresters Meeting – Woody Plants. Woody Plants and low growing trees for planting under power lines. At the Village of Lombard. Starts at 10:00am ends at 12:00 noon.

## November 15th

Evanston Arborist Certification, Municipal Specialist, Utility Specialist Exams

## November 20th

Downers Grove Arborist Certification, Municipal Specialist, Utility Specialist Exams

## November 21th

Lombard Arborist Certification, Municipal Specialist, Utility Specialist Exams

## December 8th

IAA Strategic Planning Session

## December 14th

Northeast Municipal Foresters Meeting – Plan-it-Geo. Plan-it-Geo is a software and natural resource company specializing in urban forestry. They have some pretty exciting and innovative products that many municipal arborists have not been exposed to. This meeting will be held at the Village of Lombard and starts at 10:00am and ends at 12:00 noon.

**Note:** Please visit the IAA Website for more information about these events.

## Get Certified!

Call the IAA Office for details on how to become certified.

Contact April, Jeannie or Monica at  
877-617-8887 or

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[jeannie@illinoisarborist.org](mailto:jeannie@illinoisarborist.org)  
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# 2018 ArborMaster Climbing Kit Prize Package

## 2018 ArborMaster Climbing Kit Prize Package

The *(insert chapter name)* is pleased to announce the 2018 ArborMaster Climbing Kit Prize Package for the Tree Climbing Champion (TCC), held in conjunction with the chapter's 2018 Tree Climbing Championship (TCC) event.

This climbing kit is being offered to each chapter champion (both man and woman, if applicable)! The package is intended to help equip the chapter representative(s) for the International Tree Climbing Championship (ITCC) Competition.

### Each prize package includes:

- Husqvarna: Arborist Technical Helmet by Petzl, Husqvarna Composite Multi-Purpose Axe
- Buckingham Master 5.0 Arborist Tree Climbing Saddle
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## IAA Golf Outing Raffle Winners





## IAA Golf Outing Hole Winners



Longest Drive - Tom Ringhafer



Longest Putt - Tom Byrne



Shortest Drive - Jordon Orwig



Lowest Score

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