

Arborist of the Year: Oscar Mestas



NEWSLETTER OF THE ISA TEXAS CHAPTER

Vol. 39, No. 4

November, 2015



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ON THE COVER

Oscar Mestas, our 2015 Arborist of the Year, teaches children how to plant a tree seedling as part of El Paso's Arbor Day celebration. In the photo he is showing them how to water the seedling, using a see-through planter box built for him by the El Paso Parks Department.

After four years as editor of *In the Shade*, Oscar is leaving the newsletter to pursue other interests. Read his farewell Editor's Note on page 12.

For more about Oscar's urban forestry accomplishments over a distinguished 30-year career, see page 9.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER by Vincent Debrock



It is my honor to succeed Markus Smith as your president. This past year has seen a change in director terms from 2 to 3 years, in order to be more effective. We also saw some new types of workshops, like the ISA certified tree worker aerial lift specialist for the first time in Texas, or the hands-on tree climbing workshop taught by past arborist of the year and Texas tree climbing champion Guy Leblanc.

As 2015's conference chair, I have to thank everyone that participated and especially all the volunteers that put in many hours and made this event a success yet again. With 936 registrations and 86 new ISAT members signed up at the conference, our chapter is strong and growing. Jim Carse and Markus Smith also did wonders with the vendors and, as you likely noticed, this was their biggest year yet. New features were introduced, including the poster presentation in the hall and the "just for fun" membership slideshow, which we took on a bit late but are hoping to continue next year; you can send photos to us at isatphotos@gmail.com.

I want to especially welcome the new directors and congratulate Lara Schuman as your new President-elect and Matt "Gimli" Churches as the new VP.

Your board of directors is still working hard after a short recovery from the conference as various workshops are scheduled one after another, and the traditional board retreat is coming up in early December. We were a bit short on time at the annual member meeting for new business discussion so if there are ideas or new business you would like the board to address, please email me at vincent@txheritagetrecare.com and we will present them at the retreat.

To come in 2016 are the workshops as usual but the BIG one is of course the International Tree Conference in Fort Worth next August. We will not have our annual conference next year so that we can all enjoy Fort Worth! Hope to see you all there. Our local committee is chaired by Jim Carse so if you want to volunteer, please contact him as the organization is well under way.

I wish you happy end-of-the-year holidays ahead of time! Thanks.

ISA Council of Representatives Update

ISA's Council of Representatives (COR) is comprised of one voting member from each ISA chapter, professional affiliate, and the ISA certification board. It also includes non-voting members from each of ISA's associate organizations and the TREE Fund. Primary functions of the Council include providing a forum for collaboration and cooperation between ISA chapters, developing proposals to the board of directors concerning ISA policies, and advising ISA on educational and similar programs of benefit to the members and the Society.

The 2014-2015 year was extremely active for the COR, and Margaret Spencer served as liaison from the Texas chapter as well as on the executive committee for the Council. Their advisory responsibilities included reporting to the board of directors on 14 topics of consideration, including: component recognition, the International Tree Climbing Competition, expansion of ISA, membership year model, membership considerations, and numerous policies and procedures. The Council also started a sub-group of European representatives to address issues common to their chapters. In addition, each COR representative collected information on arboriculture, forestry and landscape programs offered by colleges, universities, and technical schools within their chapter's geographical region. As Margaret's term limit expired, the new council liaison for ISAT is Michael Sultan.

NEW MEMBERS

Chris Acuff Wylie
 Scott Allen Houston
 Evan Anderson Huntsville
 Nicholas Anderson Austin
 Scott Anderson . . . Triassic Moab, UT
 Michael Ansley Euless
 Zachary Anthony College Station
 Amy Atkins City of College Station College Station
 Alexandra Ballejo San Marcos
 Dustin Beck Houston Tree Surgeons Houston
 Carly Blankenship Austin
 Kristen Bousquet Lincoln, NE
 Eric Bowman San Marcos
 Fred Breitbarth Waco
 Cody Brown San Marcos
 Juan Bryan Richmond
 Dylan Buffington Washington
 Neil Butterfras . . . Texas Turf Management Houston
 Joseph Cameron Millican
 Hannah Cruce Houston
 Rachel Cywinski San Antonio
 James DiPiazza Dallas
 Terri Drury Plano
 James Elliott, SSC Calvert
 Angel England Austin
 Ricardo Espinoza San Antonio
 Kenneth Esquivel . . . GTT & Preferred Landscaping Inc. Austin
 Justin Estopinal . . . Friendswood Firewood & Tree Service . . . Friendswood
 Eric Evans Muskogee, OK
 Daniel Firova Laredo
 Nathan Fiorenza College Station

Michael Giedraitis College Station
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 Cody Goldman City of Tyler Urban Forestry Tyler
 Taylor Guyres College Station
 Mark Hance Arbor Masters Grapevine
 Kevin Hardy Dallas
 Jeremy Hernandez San Angelo
 Michael Hewett Bastrop
 Christopher Howell San Marcos
 Don Jones Conroe
 Justin Jordan Austin
 Amber Joy Austin
 Naoto Kumazawa Dallas
 Brian Larson Corpus Christi
 Josh Leonard East Texas Tree Doc, LLC Ore City
 Garret Lindsey Nacogdoches
 Ling Yin Liu City Of San Antonio San Antonio
 Joseph Lovicott Belton
 Rene Maciel Edko LLC San Angelo
 Kevin MacWithey . . . Hill Country Lawn & Landscape Fredericksburg
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 David Marks Environmental Design Tomball
 Joseph Marshall Hartville, OH
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 Salvador Ortiz Denton
 Dan Paberz Round Rock
 Stephen Patterson Nacogdoches
 Bradley Paxton Austin
 Atha Phillips Austin
 Golden Wade Powell . Texas A&M Forest Service Smithville
 Grant Priess Nacogdoches
 Elaine Ritchie Rowlett
 Ben Robertson Backbone Valley Nursery Marble Falls
 Isiah Robinson Dallas
 Joshua Ronson Kyle
 Jack Roper Dallas
 Will Rose College Station
 David Rowley Mission Rd Developmental Center . . . San Antonio
 Matthew Ruffin Nacogdoches
 Russell Sackett Richmond
 Martin Salinas Galveston
 Jacob Sanchez San Antonio
 Mauricio Segura Austin
 GW Shaw Shaw Landscaping Abilene
 James Smith Lamar Electric Cooperative Paris
 Benye Stevenson Pearland
 Angela Sutherland Nacogdoches
 Dale Temple Houston
 Ernest Trevino Brenham
 Lana Welford Nacogdoches
 Tom Wolf Davey Tree Knoxville, TN
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EDITOR'S NOTE by Rebecca Johnson



Wow, I have some really big shoes to fill. Oscar has been an amazing editor, rounding up interesting articles for every edition. Let me tell you, it's not an easy task. We have some great writers among our membership, but we're all so very busy.

For those of you who haven't met me, I'm Education & Outreach Coordinator at TreeFolks, the urban forestry nonprofit in Austin, and a confirmed arborholic. I fell in love with trees and discovered forestry in high school. After a stint as anything but a forester, I found urban forestry and knew I'd found my calling.

I'm an insatiable learner and I'm fascinated by science and personal stories. All of us have a great story to tell, the trick is in realizing our story.

I'm looking forward to reading your stories and learning from all of you. So don't be shy, don't tell me "I'm not a good writer," just put something down on paper and send it to me at cercis11@gmail.com.

Intensive Tree Climbing Workshop November 9, San Antonio

Hands-on introduction to climbing techniques from basic to SRT. Sponsor: San Antonio Arborist Association. Location: Camargo Park, San Antonio. Limited availability. Important safety and other requirements. Details and registration: <http://www.sa-aa.com/event-2057810>

Carabiner Recall Notice

DMM issued a product recall notice September 14 on some carabiners. Go to dmmclimbing.com and type "recall" in the search box at the top of the page. This brings up the original recall notice, the returns procedure, and the latest updates. The original recall notice details the affected products and shows how to identify whether or not a product should be returned to DMM.

Auction results better than last year

The TTC auction was a big success. Matt Grubisich and Jim Carse really pitched in. It looks like ISAT took in \$4,549 this year, compared to \$3,782 last year. Thanks to all involved!

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2015 Texas Tree Conference Round-Up

by Micah Pace, ISAT Board of Directors; Urban Forestry Specialist, Preservation Tree Services, Inc.



A demonstration of sonic tomography at Tree Academy Station 1.

September 30th through October 2nd marked the 36th annual Texas Tree Conference (TTC), Academy, Tree School, and Trade Show in Waco. With over 1,000 participants and attendees, ISAT presented its capstone educational event to its members, providing a diverse list of topics and demonstrations of the latest technologies in tree care, assessment, and management.

This year's Tree Academy, through six great educational stations, offered attendees the opportunity to learn about exciting new technologies that can add value to the services tree care professionals provide every day, as well as detailed information on topics that deserve a fresh look each and every year. Clint Pearson with Bartlett Tree Experts and Gary Raffel of Dynamic Tree Systems provided excellent demonstrations of decay assessment

and root mapping technologies using sonic tomography and ground penetrating radar, respectively. Dan Staley, Principal with Analemma Resources, organized a group of 14 north Texas unmanned aerial vehicle (i.e. drone) pilots to demonstrate the potential for future use of this fast-growing technology for tree assessment and

management...and fun of course!

Dr. Hans Williams, with Stephen F. Austin University, helped participants learn more about in-the-field soil assessments which are critical to site and resource evaluations.

Mark Duff of the Texas A&M Forest Service demonstrated how portable sawmills can be instrumental tools for utilizing urban wood for products much more valuable than chipping for mulch/compost. Finally, Dr.

Chris Luley edified us with important fungal decay information that is critical for tree risk assessments, plant health care, and professional tree care.

The 2015 TTC hosted many great speakers and topics divided into three categories (tracks): Commercial, Municipal, and Utility. Some keynote speakers included: Dr. Chris Luley, Urban Forestry, LLC.; Geoffrey Donovan, USDA Forest Service; Jim Skiera, Executive Director of ISA; and Richard Bewley, AEP Transmission. Conference participants also enjoyed a great trade show with numerous vendors providing a wealth of information on tools and resources that make managing important tree resources effective and efficient. This year we enjoyed the support and presence of 57 sponsors and exhibitors! Our 2015 bookstore, managed by John Warner and other volunteers, continued to provide useful resources to promote education and build professionalism. ▶

The Wood Mizer portable sawmill, co-owned by Mark Duff.



A packed conference lecture.



◀ This year's Award Luncheon honored winners in four categories: Outstanding Arbor Day, Arboricultural Project of the Year, Gold Leaf Award for Landscape Improvement, and Arborist of the Year. (For details see article on pages 8 and 9.) Congratulations to everyone for a great year of dedication and commitment!

Friday concluded the conference with our annual Tree School for English speakers, led by Guy Leblanc, and Spanish speakers, led by Mark Duff. The Tree School is a critical tool to engage young and/or new tree care professionals. Cultivating wise and responsible arborists is at the heart of what ISAT does, and this is a great investment of time and service each year.

Thank you to everyone who volunteered, participated, and attended! We look forward to seeing you all at the ISA Conference in Fort Worth in August, 2016! ■

1. Drone demos were popular at the TTC.
2. Gary Raffel and his ground penetrating radar for detecting tree roots.
3. Dr. Chris Luley talks about decay fungi.
4. The social side of the conference.



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2015 Texas Tree Awards

Over 600 arborists, foresters, landscape architects, volunteers, educators, students and affiliated professionals gathered for the Texas Community Forestry and Arboriculture Awards Luncheon at our Texas Tree Conference in Waco. The awards are decided by a three person committee with representation from ISAT, Texas Urban Forestry Council, and Texas A&M Forest Service. Thank you to all of our nominees – there are great people and projects all over this large, amazing state.

Outstanding Arbor Day Activities: City of Texarkana

The City of Texarkana is our 2015 Outstanding Arbor Day recipient both for their official Arbor Day and for their establishment of a city tree nursery.

Led by Planning and Development Director David Orr, the city of Texarkana has done a great job promoting urban and community forestry in North East Texas. This year's biggest impact came

from the establishment of an official Arbor Day celebration and the establishment of a nursery that is growing native trees to be planted in city parks, along roads, and provided to citizens in the community. Partnerships with Keep Texarkana Beautiful, Texarkana College Earth Club, Texas A&M University Texarkana, Texarkana Water Utilities and others have been key to the success of the program, with a survival rate of over 95% for their first 500 trees. ■



(l to r) David Orr, Director of Planning & Community Development, City of Texarkana; Holden Fleming, Farmers Market Manager, City of Texarkana; Tom Boggus, State Forester and Director, Texas A&M Forest Service; Zaina Gates, Regional Urban and Community Forester, Texas A&M Forest Service.

Arboricultural Project of the Year: Houston Area Urban Forestry Council

Houston Area Urban Forestry Council (HAUFC) is our Arboricultural Project of the Year winner for their 2015 Tree Planting Competition.

HAUFC is the regional, non-profit urban forestry council for the Houston area, and this year's planting competition was their 7th annual. This year, 1600 #5 (previously known as 5-gallon) trees were planted in less than 2 hours by 16 teams of 11 people on Harris County Flood Control land. These trees will help intercept rainfall and reduce the amount of runoff that needs to be managed. The winning professional team from Bio Landscape planted 100 trees in less than 20 minutes. It is amazing and you can see a video of this year's competition at <http://vimeo.com/119315675> ■

Winning tree planting team in the amateur category.



(l to r) Markus Smith, ISAT President; John Watson, Harris County Flood Control District; Mickey Merritt, Texas A&M Forest Service; Gene Basler, President, Houston Area Urban Forestry Council; Ken Lindsey, CenterPoint Energy; Tom Boggus.



The Gold Leaf Award for Landscape Improvement: The University of Texas at El Paso



The University of Texas at El Paso is our 2015 Gold Leaf Award winner for their Campus Transformation Project.

With the addition of 700 trees of 24 varieties, the new pedestrian friendly project reinvents the natural arroyo terrain that once defined the center of campus before it was replaced with roads and parking lots. Planting a variety of drought tolerant shade trees, environmentally sensitive shrubs, grasses and plants native to the Chihuahua desert will lower temperatures and help prevent heat exhaustion.

This multifaceted project was made possible through the collaboration of El Paso MPO, TXDOT, and UTEP on traffic calming measures to improve transportation safety, connectivity, and address ADA while reducing congestion and air pollution in non-attainment areas. ■

Markus Smith; Greg McNicol, Associate Vice President, UTEP; Kent Sundberg, Project Manager, Ten Eyck Landscape Architects; Tom Boggus.



Arborist of the Year: Oscar Mestas, Regional Urban Forester, Texas A&M Forest Service

Our 2015 Texas Arborist of the Year is Oscar Mestas, Regional Urban Forester with Texas A&M Forest Service out of El Paso.

Oscar has a distinguished career that spans over 30 years. It all started at Stephen F. Austin University where he earned his Bachelor of Science in Forestry and met his wife Gail. He worked as a park supervisor for Harris County Precinct 4 before his native desert called him home to West Texas to serve as regional urban forester with TFS for almost 25 years.

Oscar is an ISA certified arborist and municipal specialist, a Society of American Foresters certified forester, and is tree risk assessment qualified. Oscar has served the green industry in many ways including as editor for the Texas Chapter of ISA, founder of West Texas Urban Forestry Council, chairman of El Paso Tree Board, and board member of Keep El Paso Beautiful.

He served as public information officer during the 2011 fire season for the Rockhouse, Wildcat, and Possum Kingdom fires. He co-hosted the Sunscape Saturday morning radio show on NPR and has written for many publications. ■



Left: Oscar surfing the Bisti.

Below: Oscar informing the public about the Rockhouse Fire, Fort Davis.



Markus Smith; Gail Mestas, wife of Oscar; Oscar Mestas, Regional Urban Forester, Texas A&M Forest Service; Tom Boggus.

ISA bookstore exceeded expectations and sales

According to Lisa Butler with ISA, sales of books and merchandise at this year's TTC exceeded the previous year. The bookstore offers members an opportunity to look over the books before purchasing at the discounted membership rate. If a book is not offered or is sold out, ISA ships the purchase free. This is a win-win for ISA and ISAT members.

2016 will be a banner year for ISA and the Texas chapter with the pending international conference in Ft. Worth, Texas. John Warner, who has managed the bookstore for the past three years, knows the importance of having the ability to offer the latest in research and materials to conference attendees. Each year, Lisa and John try to match up the presenters and topics with appropriate books.

Thanks to everyone for helping make 2015 a great year.



Lisa waiting on customers at the bookstore checkout.



Co-authors Pete Smith and Gretchen Riley sign copies of the 2015 edition of *Famous Trees of Texas*.

We had our biggest number of exhibitors at this year's Texas Tree Conference: 44 total. A special thanks to the following:

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--Jim Carse, UT-Austin, Landscape Services

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EDITOR'S NOTE by Oscar Mestas

These past four years as your editor went by really fast. It was a steep learning curve in the beginning but as time went on it became easier for me and I really enjoyed my time putting together each newsletter. I learned a lot on the do's and don'ts, and the complicated approval process for reprinting from other venues and media markets, plus sometimes they wanted a lot of money, which I did not pay; the article wasn't worth that much money. Hopefully I did not disappoint too many contributors, because sometimes you all were overzealous and bombarded me with tons of stuff so I couldn't fit it all in (this was a good thing). Many many thanks to my associate editor Jeannette Ivy. She really is the backbone of the newsletter and I will sorely miss working with Jeannette. But times change, people change, and life goes on as my life is doing, and I will be moving on to new adventures. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you as your editor and officer for ISAT. I leave you all in good hands with Rebecca Johnson. She is already grabbing the reins and galloping ahead. I'm looking forward to reading her first issue this November.

I also want to thank everyone for the great honor of receiving the Arborist of the Year award. It was not expected and I've always wanted one of those nice prints; it now hangs proudly in my house where I can see it every day. I leave you words of wisdom: "Just because you can doesn't mean you should." Farewell my friends, stay safe.

Certified Tree Worker Aerial Lift Written and Skills Exam

November 20, Austin

Only 6 spots available total!!! **Deadline to register is November 4.** Location: 3811 E 12 St., Austin, TX 78721. Check in at 7:30 am, exam begins at 8 am. Contact Misti Perez, 512-965-1076. Registration: <http://www.isa-arbor.com/certification/becomeCertified/examDatesAndLocations.aspx?id=4681>

Communications, Trust, Self-Awareness Workshop

November 13, Austin

This one-day ISAT Arboricultural Masters Series workshop by organizational specialist Ken Martlage will give you powerful tools to improve your communication skills. Location: Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

If you are a municipal, commercial or utility arborist, or just about anyone who needs to communicate with others to get your job done, this workshop is for you!

Questions? Contact Lara Schuman, ISA Texas Chapter Event Chair, Lara.Schuman@austintexas.gov



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Help get our trees ready for the world's best climbers!

ITCC prep day set for February 6

by Kevin Bassett, TTCC Chair, ITCC Chapter Liaison

In order to get our competition trees ready for the world's best tree climbers next April we've scheduled a work day Saturday, February 6, to do a little pruning on the 8-9 trees the ITCC committee has selected for the competition. The trees are located in Brackenridge Park in San Antonio and are large beautiful bald cypress and a large pecan. Some pruning will be necessary to remove large deadwood and other selected limbs. I expect a good crew of 10-16 climbers and 6-7 ground personnel can complete the task in 5-6 hours. There will be a mandatory gear inspection, safety meeting, and a pruning review for all who participate. CEUs will be awarded for the educational content of these meetings. Lunch and an event t-shirt will be provided. I will be working to get us a low rate on rooms at the ITCC hotel for this event as well as during the ITCC. To volunteer, email kbassett@arborillogical.com or phone 972-877-0358.

ITCC Schedule

Thursday March 31, 2016: ITCC setup day. For those of you who really want the most out of this event the setup day is the best. The volunteer teams are organized for each event and those teams work to get their events ready. A huge amount of technical knowledge, know-how and techniques are exchanged and this make setup day my favorite day of the whole competition.

Friday April 1, 2016: No fooling, the world's best tree climbers will have gear inspection and the walk-through of events to view the ITCC setup team's diabolical schemes to find the best 4-5 climbers for the Master's Challenge.

Saturday April 2, 2016: ITCC preliminary events, recreational climbs and Arbor Fair.

Sunday April 3, 2016: Master's Challenge. ITCC champions are determined.

Texas Tree Climbing Championship

May 20 and 21, 2016, Cypress Bend/ Landa Park, New Braunfels

Wednesday May 18: Setup day. • **Thursday May 19:** Educational seminar. • **Friday May 20:** Preliminaries.

Saturday May 21: TTCC Master's Challenge.

The winners of this event will be eligible to represent Texas at the 2016 NATCC in Niagara, Ontario, Canada and the 2017 ITCC in Washington, DC.

Details of the TTCC are in the works and more information will be forthcoming as the events get closer. If you have input for the TTCC committee to consider, now is a good time. I look forward to your suggestions and positive feedback.

As you can see, the Tree Climbing Championships are growing, and your participation is why. Over the years we have continually grown and the Texas Chapter has been honored to be selected for the 2016 ITCC. The last time this occurred was in 1986. Let's make the best of 2016. Check out the Texas Tree Climbing Championship Facebook page and the ISAT web site for more information as the events get close. So mark your calendars now for a great 2016 in tree climbing. ■

We Shall Gather at the River!!!!

COMMENTS FROM TTC SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

This was the first time for me to attend such a big conference after being certified as an arborist and after moving to Texas last year. The conference covered surprisingly very wide range of topics - from sustainability, economy to safety - and informed me how greatly arboriculture can contribute to the larger and urgent issue today - not just around trees. I was very much inspired and encouraged throughout the event, and I am so glad that I attended the conference.

Naoto Kumazawa, Sr. Landscape Architect
Park and Recreation Department,
Fort Worth
Naoto.Kumazawa@fortworthtexas.gov

2015 was another great year for the Texas Tree Conference and Academy. As in prior years, I especially enjoyed the Academy on Wednesday. It's great to have a chance to be hands-on with what others are doing in the industry. I think the drones were a unanimous hit and I loved seeing Mark Duff and crew running the sawmill. Although Waco will be missed next year, I'm already looking forward to the 2016 ISA International Conference in Fort Worth. Thank you TFS for the scholarship and opportunity to attend.

Craig Fox, Urban Forester
Park and Recreation Department, Fort Worth
craig.fox@fortworthtexas.gov

I was very pleased with the attendance and presenters who kept pushing the going green movement. As an attendee of the Texas Tree Conference for the first time in Texas, I was able to network, learn, and apply evolving best management practices to my current occupation.

Cliff Hawkins, Urban Forester
City of McAllen
chawkins@mcallen.net



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This was my second time to attend the Texas Tree Conference. As a young municipal arborist this conference has been so helpful for me, especially this year. All of the classes were great; getting to learn about new technology and of course hearing all of the experts give their opinions on different topics. However, I believe the most valuable thing I received from the conference was the networking. It is very comforting to know I have the ability to reach out to the veterans in our field for advice and guidance. All-in-all I thank the Texas A&M Forest Service and ISA for giving us the opportunity to attend.

Tyler Froberg, Urban Forester
Parks & Recreation Department,
City of Pearland
tfroberg@pearlandtx.gov

I thoroughly enjoyed the tree conference this year and every year. It is a great opportunity to network and get to know other arborists. I really enjoyed learning about what other cities are doing in Texas as far as sustainability and revising tree ordinances.

Wendy Pappas, Forester
Arlington Parks and Recreation
Department, Arlington
Wendy.Pappas@arlingtontx.gov

I cannot say how much I look forward to the Texas Tree Conference each year. The conference was a great experience that was very well organized. Everyone you talked to was ready to share any knowledge that they had with you, with a smile on their face. One of the things I appreciate is being able to glean from the wealth of knowledge and experience that these people have to offer. New friendships were made and old ones strengthened.

Brent Pearson, City Arborist,
El Paso
PearsonBE@elpasotexas.gov

My time this year at the 2015 Texas Tree Conference was a memorable and productive time. It was an amazing time to be around such a wealth of knowledge and experience and to collaborate with others. The Tree Academy and Texas Tree Conference were well worth attending and I have encouraged many others involved with tree care and planning to attend in the future. I am so thankful for the chance to attend and be a part of such an amazing event.

Phillip Christian, Forester
Corpus Christi Tree Advisory Committee
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Utility Inside Partners

by Rusty Evans, Oncor Senior Director of Distribution Services

This article was originally published in the Utility Arborist Newsline's July/August 2015 issue.

Delivering power to more than 3.2 million homes and businesses across nearly a third of the Lone Star State is a challenge that is met with a combination of resources: a dedicated workforce of employees and contractors, tried and true processes, and internal partnerships that ensure the seamless sharing of resources and organizational synergy to keep the lights on for the 10 million Texans that live within our footprint.

As Senior Director of Distribution Service at Oncor, I know that facilitating all of these moving parts is vital to our company's overall goal of being a trusted advisor to our customers while also maintaining a safe and reliable electric grid.

Working with colleagues in all areas of expertise – from utility arborists to customer operations and environmental experts – allows for collaboration that carries our storied tradition far beyond the world of vegetation management.

Oncor's team of customer service professionals, like our area managers for example, are the front line in the connection we keep with customers and city leaders across the 402 communities we serve. Our vegetation management team works with area managers to ensure that all parties are informed and that messaging is consistent, especially when our work draws community interest. Our arborists join in meetings with city councils, and neighborhood and homeowners associations to lend their expertise and answer any questions from elected officials. These two internal entities work in concert to manage and resolve customer concerns in a united fashion.

"Trimming customers' trees can be fairly complex on occasion, as we have to be very close partners both in the strategic sense of what we're trying to do, but also translating it to the moment," said Oncor's Vice President of Dallas Customer Operations Charles Elk.

Our company's vegetation-focused Energy-Saving Tree program, in partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation, helps our area managers promote and provide free trees to homeowners and communicate the importance of planting in strategic, safe locations across their individual communities. Our Know Before You Grow campaign takes the message of safe planting a step further by educating adults and children alike about selecting the right tree for the right location, how the mature heights can impact electric lines, and tips to plant trees in ways that create greater efficiencies and prevent the potential for costly trimming and damage.

As with all transmission and distribution electric delivery companies, vegetation management practices and the environment go hand-in-hand. Threatened and endangered species are protected by Oncor's staff of biologists and the environmental department, who conducts field reviews to make sure habitats and species are preserved and protected. This strikes an important, but delicate balance that is necessary to provide safe and reliable service while also maintaining effective environmental stewardship.

"Oncor's vegetation management organization is very respectful and cognizant of those laws protecting threatened and endangered species," said Oncor's Senior Manager of Environment Martha Henson. "It's a two way street: they need information from us to make sure they're not impacting habitat or species and we need information from them in order to fully assess their project plans for any environmental impacts."

In 2012 Oncor's environmental department obtained the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's largest Endangered Species Act incidental take permit in the southwest region. This allows for the proactive preservation and conservation of 11 protected species across 100 counties within our service



territory. Our vegetation management program is part of the permit's maintenance category and allows for the seamless implementation of a review process between Vegetation Management and Environment prior to all maintenance and construction projects.

Our environmental partners have assisted us in avoiding environmentally-sensitive water management zones in areas with the potential for a breeding habitat of the endangered Houston Toad in five different Texas counties. Where necessary, we created a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service-approved 15-foot path and selectively trimmed trees in 18 counties in order to avoid the potential habitat of the Golden-Cheeked Warbler. In 2014, more than 32,900 acres were reviewed and evaluated for potential threatened/endangered species and their habitat. This vital partnership also keeps communication channels open to discuss continued USFWS permit requirements, proposed regulations and changing requirements that guide our daily practices.

All of this would not be possible without the important collaboration with our colleagues in Oncor's operations division. During major outage events like winter ice storms and spring tornadoes, or even on blue sky days when routine maintenance and outage prevention is the ultimate goal, having the ear and the hand of both our transmission and distribution experts makes our company's entire operation run smoothly.

Each time a weather system threatens any part of our service territory, we organize our own crews to accompany our servicemen in the field, positioning them in areas of the most likely impact and routing them as weather moves through and damage occurs. We station arborists and vegetation management contractor supervisors at operations centers to ensure that our support is timely and targeted. This is all in an effort to meet the obligation: to provide safe, reliable service regardless of the current conditions outside.

"During major outage events, it's about having a strategic plan in place that will use the appropriate resources in the right places. Having dependable partners is instrumental in helping

us restore power as quickly and safely as possible," said Oncor's Vice President of Distribution Operations Keith Hull.

During a massive winter weather event in December 2013, nearly 900,000 customers lost power over a five day period – the second largest storm in our 100-year history. Freezing rain and subzero temperatures for more than four of those days led to tens of thousands of new outages each day with ice continuing to accumulate and compromise trees. Almost 5,000 Oncor employees, tree trimming contractors and mutual assistance utility partners from eight states worked around the clock to make power restorations. Vegetation management and operations leadership coordinated crews from Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Alabama, Kansas, Mississippi and Florida until all of our customers were restored.



Throughout each year, our proactive distribution work aims to minimize these tree-related storm impacts. We all know trees can have a devastating impact on service. In 2015, Oncor has increased its tree trimming budget in an effort to maintain continued reliability.

On the transmission side and to ensure the most reliable service, we regularly meet with maintenance and construction supervisors and

district managers in each of the 19 districts across our footprint to discuss the status of our facilities. It's then that plans to trim trees and mow brush within our rights of way are prioritized based on need and historical data associated with the line.

"There is so much at stake that it is imperative that transmission and vegetation management have this partnership to ensure we are making the best use of assets," said Oncor's Senior Director of Transmission Operations Don Cole. "It's a collaborative process to determine priority. Both of us without the other would not be successful and that's the best type of partnership."

Regardless of the project or strategic partner, we all understand the importance and beauty that trees and other vegetation provide to our communities and our environment. At Oncor, we believe that our business is best served by working together towards one ultimate goal: balancing cost, reliability and aesthetics to carry our customers and our electric grid for another 100 successful years. ■



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Miguel Pastenes Wins North American Tree Climbing Championship

by Kevin Bassett – TTCC Chair

It's been an incredibly busy fall season and a lot has happened on the Tree Climbing Championship front. First and foremost Texas Champion Miguel Pastenes has added another victory, this time in the prestigious North American Tree Climbing Championship. The Rocky Mountain Chapter and the NATCC team did an outstanding job on this event, held in Longmont, CO. Texas was well represented by Jimmy Pritchard and Texas champion Miguel Pastenes. Yours truly was able to serve as an Aerial Rescue scoring judge and as a Master's Challenge scoring judge. The experience was one of the highlights of my career.

Miguel was the third place qualifier into the Master's Challenge along with the local favorite Luke Glines, second, and Kyle Donaldson of the New England chapter, fourth. Leading the preliminaries was three-time ITCC champion Mark Chisholm. The North American Championship has thus far eluded Mark and it is a title he would definitely like to add to his prodigious list of accomplishments. His conquest of the NATCC will have to wait another year as Miguel captured the 2015 title. Other notable climbers in the field were Jared Abrojena, past ITCC and NATCC champion; Cormac Nagan, 2013 NATCC champion; and defending NATCC champion Chad Brey.

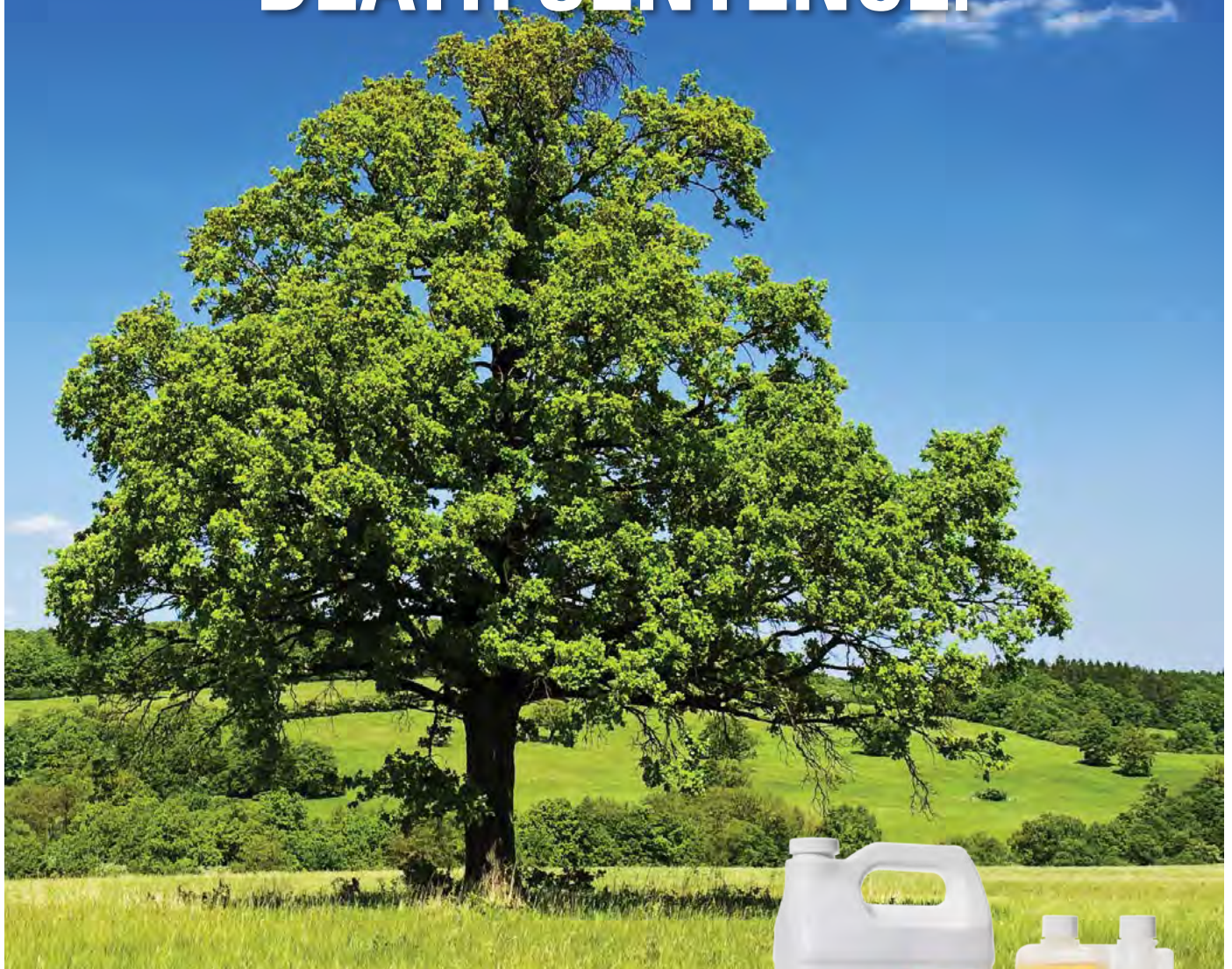
Needless to say the competition was at an extremely high level. All of the Championship round climbers exhibited superior skills during their Master's climb. Kyle led off and completed all stations and retrieved his gear within the time limit of 26 minutes, but he failed to overly impress the judging team. Ultimately, Kyle finished fourth. Mr. Chisholm had an excellent climb but in the end he was unable to retrieve his ropes from the tree within the time limit. The resulting 20-point penalty put him in third place. Both Miguel and Luke had excellent climbs and scored well at every station. The difference of less than six points can be found on the limb toss station, where Luke was unable to hit the target with any of his three chances while Miguel

was able to put the bread in the basket on the very first try. The local crowd was somewhat disappointed that Luke did not win but were very positive in their support of and congratulations to Miguel.

Marylou Dussault of the Quebec chapter won her third NATCC championship by beating ITCC champion Jamilee Kempton and Jocelyn Lohse from the Mid-Atlantic Chapter. I keep hoping that one of our Texas women tree climbers will join the fun and attempt to qualify for the ITCC. For a detailed report of the scoring go to www.itcc-isa.com. This is also an excellent site for all information regarding the tree climbing competitions, forms, rules and other vital information. ■



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Sun Country Landscape Conference



Los Tree Amigos of the West Texas Urban Forestry Council are bringing you the 2015 Sun Country Landscape Conference November 19–21 in El Paso.

Thursday November 19: All presentations will be in Spanish.

Friday November

20: Presentations will be geared more for the arborist, urban forester, landscape architect, architect, engineer, planner, landscape contractor and other natural resource professionals.

Saturday November 21: Now it's the homeowner's turn to learn how to keep their homestead green and lush while conserving water and our desert resources.

TDA, ISA and AIA CEUs available. Details and registration: www.wtufc.org/



Paul Johnson, Matt Churches and John Giedraitis attended ISA's leadership workshop in Champaign, IL.