

# BRANCHING OUT

2015

## Dispatch from TCIA's Winter Management Conference

ROOTED IN KNOWLEDGE

VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 1

Welcome to our newest publication! Branching Out is intended to supplement the Treetise and Leaflet by bringing you news and information from the tree care industry. Here we will explore the trade associations dedicated to the tree care industry, and make sense of the various certifications available to the individuals who actually care for your trees. This first issue of Branching Out will recap the Tree Care Industry Association's (TCIA) annual Winter Management Conference, which our team recently attended in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico.

### A Brief Introduction to TCIA

The Tree Care Industry Association, established in 1938 as the National Arborist Association, works to professionalize the tree care industry through the development of educational and safety programs for individuals, as well as overall management programs for companies. Designations include Certified Tree Safety Professional (CTSP) and TCIA Accredited Business. TCIA is comprised of more than 2,200 tree care and affiliated companies. Learn more about TCIA at their website: <http://tcia.org/about-us>.



### A Business Trip to Cabo?

Every year, TCIA holds the four-day Winter Management Conference in a tropical location. The bulk of TCIA member companies are located in the Mid West and North East United States and owners are grateful for the opportunity to escape the cold while taking a positive step for their business. Many attendees bring their families and make an annual vacation out of the conference.



TCIA offers WMC attendees a list of optional excursions that take place during the week after educational sessions have ended. These outings allow participants the chance to experience some element of the host city while networking with tree care company owners and employees from all over the world. This networking, which for us took place by the pool, in the resort restaurants, on a chartered catamaran, and even in downtown Cabo San Lucas, was one of the most beneficial aspects of the trip. Every

### Message from the President

The idea behind the Winter Management Conference is for us to take time each year to lean on our industry resources and improve our company culture through the experience of the best companies and entrepreneurs out there. This year, over 450 tree care professionals attended from all over the nation as well as from Canada and England, thus providing for global networking, education and "in the trenches" experience. We find this conference so valuable that this year we brought 8 representatives. We soaked up ways we can do things better and got a good look at what we're doing right.



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member of our team picked up some piece of information, business practice, cautionary tale or success story, that is now informing the way we do our job at Four Seasons Tree Care and the way FSTC functions as a company. Perhaps one of the best aspects of the conference was the opportunity it gave us to brainstorm and get to know other members of the Four Seasons team on a personal level in a way that is rarely feasible during a standard work week. We returned rested and enthusiastic about what we as individuals and a group can accomplish in 2015.

## A Mission of Safety

Last year, TCIA launched a fund which will subsidize safety training for companies that find the cost of such critical programs burdensome. Through donations from TCIA member and associated companies, the Arborist Safety Training Institute (ASTI) now boasts an endowment of \$2 million. According to TCIA's website, "ASTI will provide grants for job and safety training to minimize consequent deaths and injuries, and promote overall workforce safety that is critical for the tree care industry." <http://tcia.org/foundation/asti>

### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"This year's Winter Management was especially valuable with members of our Marketing, Business Development, Account Management and Operations teams joining Bryan and me for the conference. Not only did the team benefit by gaining a perspective of what tree care is like nationwide, but the time spent together brainstorming and networking with other business owners helped us grasp a vision of how we can improve our business for 2015."

-Christy Moller, Executive Vice President

"What most struck me at WMC was the scale and activity of the global tree care industry. We work so hard to innovate and improve our own company but I have great appreciation for the work TCIA is doing to further education, safety and professionalism for the industry as a whole."

-Katie Blizzard, Director of Marketing and Business Development

"Everything was awesome. It was great to spend such an educational, fun week with our team. But we also met and became friends with other progressive tree care companies."

-Shannon Miller, Senior Account Manager

"Going in to WMC I knew that Four Seasons was a great company, but it was rewarding to see just how much we're getting right."

-Joshua Sanford, Account Manager

"My time at the Winter Management Conference was both personally and professionally gratifying. It was a great opportunity to learn about industry leading business practices while growing closer with my Four Seasons Tree Care family!"

-Gabe Sady, GPS/GIS Inventory Manager

## Spotlight on Safety

As the person tasked with managing the safety of our crews, I found Safety Day at WMC to be extremely beneficial. The biggest takeaway for me was the transparency with which the attending executives and safety directors talked about weaknesses in their safety culture. Instead of pretending to be immune to safety incidents, these folks admitted the existence of safety issues, talked openly about the processes they'd found effective in addressing them, and also about how they had been able to rebound from their weaknesses. In safety jargon we talk about "near misses" but I prefer to call these incidents "near hits." The fact of the matter is that something *did* happen, something did go wrong, the consequences just weren't as bad as they could have been. Now, no matter how big or small the incident, I make it a training opportunity. Every morning with the crews, I take 5 or 10 minutes to talk about something that happened the day before. Every time a crew goes out to work something happens that can be turned into a training moment. If we actively learn from these moments we will be that much safer.

-Brian Bruce, Director of Operations and Safety

