



TREE FUND Report



Sept. 2013

2013 Tour an International Success Story

Eighty cyclists queued up on Niagara Falls' Rainbow Bridge on the morning of July 28, eager to cross the border into the U.S. and get rolling. By week's end their number would swell to 97, including cyclists from Germany, England, Canada and the U.S. The cause that united them was their love of trees; they'd come to Ontario to ride the 22nd STIHL Tour des Trees to benefit the TREE Fund.

The Tour des Trees got its start in 1992 when 13 arborists, as crazy about cycling as they were about trees, decided to put their wheels to work for tree research. They wagered (correctly) that riding 1,000+ miles in a week would attract attention to their cause, and they raised \$89,000. Since 1992 the crazy factor has been scaled back a bit (this year's riders logged 585 miles in 7 days), but the passion that drives the participants remains a constant.

That passion is contagious. Wendy Robinson, a first-time Tour rider and TREE Fund Trustee from Bend, OR, said, "I was amazed by the warm reception we received as we rode through the small towns and communities. The number of local folks taking pictures, waving flags and calling out encouragement was totally unexpected. As arborists, this is our opportunity to connect with the community and share the importance of a healthy tree canopy. It was an unforgettable experience."



Community foresters, nurseries and tree care companies from New York and Ontario turned out in force to welcome the Tour. They showed their appreciation for its cyclists, each of whom had raised \$3,500 or more in donations for the privilege of riding 585 miles around Lake Ontario in all kinds of weather.

Lewis Tree Service joined forces with Birchcrest Tree and Landscape and the Tour to plant a tree at the West Webster fire station in Rochester, NY.

Firefighters, police officers and paramedics in dress uniform gathered to dedicate the tree and express their thanks to Lewis, Birchcrest and the TREE Fund for helping to launch the station's memorial grove honoring Rochester's first responders.

Lewis, National Grid, Bartlett TREE Experts and the New York State Arborists kept up a non-stop welcome for the Tour in New York, hosting lunches, dinners and rest stops and positioning bucket trucks, banners, and volunteers at every turn. Said TREE Fund Trustee and first-time Tour rider Randy Miller, "We were thrilled with the welcome that the tree care community extended to the Tour in New York. We felt honored, and appreciated, and maybe a little spoiled. That's a good way to finish up a 100-mile day on your bike."

The Tour's second day was its most demanding. Following a public education event hosted by Arborjet spotlighting Rochester's ash tree protection campaign, the cyclists embarked on a 126 mile trek through the Finger Lakes region to Syracuse. The itinerary included an appearance by Professor Elwood Pricklethorn (aka Toronto arborist and



veteran Tour rider Warren Hoselton), who offered a kid-friendly version of Arboriculture 101 to local campers at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. The Professor's program included an interactive rendition of photosynthesis, a pledge to 'always plant the right tree in the right place,' and a copy of *I Can Name 50 Trees Today!* for each child, courtesy of Educational Programming sponsor Bartlett Tree Experts.

The Montezuma event was the first of five children's education programs featuring Professor Pricklethorn. By week's end 200 children had joined his campaign to 'give trees a chance,' and another 200 books were donated to libraries in New York and Ontario. The Professor received an especially warm welcome on Friday as the Tour rode through scenic Prince Edward County, home to Hoselton and three other members of Team Canada.



The 2013 Tour's legacy includes 20 new trees in New York and Ontario, and among the residents of the destination communities, a new appreciation for trees and the hard work that goes into keeping them healthy and strong. Most importantly, the ride has generated \$585,000 in donations and sponsorships for the TREE Fund to support its research, education and scholarship programs.

"The Tour is our opportunity to take the mission of the TREE Fund on the road for a week each year," said TREE Fund President/CEO Janet Bornancin. "This ride is a unique blend of passion, hard work and fun. It's also a powerhouse fundraiser for research and education, thanks to our riders and sponsors. The Tour funds the research that provides new knowledge, techniques and equipment to the tree care industry, and education programs that engage and support the next generation of tree stewards. Tour cyclists are making a real difference in their industry and the environment; they are heroes in my book."

The 2013 Tour concluded in Toronto, ON August 3. Despite occasional flat tires, wrong turns and epic downpours, participants were all smiles at the closing ceremonies on Toronto Island. Jeff Carney, a TREE Fund Trustee and self-professed 'repeat offender,' logged his 11th Tour this year. "The places, the people, the ride and the trees keep us coming back. This is my extended family; we share a bond and a purpose: to raise research dollars for the TREE Fund and advance the care and welfare of the urban forest for years to come." Wendy Robinson, relishing her new status as a *veteran* Tour rider, was more succinct. "I'll be back," she said.

The 2014 STIHL Tour des Trees will explore Wisconsin July 27-August 2, 2014. Registration opens January 7, 2014 at www.stihltourdestrees.org. View our [online photo album of the 2013 Tour](#) on Flickr.