



TREE FUND Report



Winter 2014

The Big Why

By Jim Zwack, Chairman, TREE Fund Board of Trustees



Like many nonprofits, the TREE Fund finished 2013 with an annual appeal. I'm pleased to announce that donations topped \$20,000, exceeding our goal by 33%! Thank you to all who supported this campaign, and to the donors, sponsors, event patrons and volunteers who contributed to another successful year for the TREE Fund. We appreciate your contribution and look forward to working with you again this year.

Last December (peak fundraising season for most nonprofits), I received at least six different appeals from various charities. I suspect you did too. If you donated to a cause, *why did you do it?* For me, the answer was simple: I donated to the TREE Fund because it helps my industry solve important problems.

The backbone of tree care is the difficult and dangerous work of pruning and removing trees. I donated to the TREE Fund to support research that helps us better understand how trees move, bend, and ultimately break. Biomechanics Week is a shining example of this; researchers from around the world came together to study and test new theories of how trees react to stress and load. The implications of this research for the safety of our clients and our employees are numerous.

Exotic invasive pests are devastating our landscapes. I donated to the TREE Fund to support research that helps us manage these problems both technically and financially in our communities. Dr. Richard Hauer's work at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point on the economics of emerald ash borer management offers solid data for decision-makers faced with the loss of their area's treasured ash trees.

Finally, our industry faces significant challenges within our workforce. Young people have myriad career choices, many of which offer better compensation, lower risk of injury and higher technological appeal. I donated to the TREE Fund to support college students pursuing careers in Arboriculture and Urban Forestry, and to help fund environmental education providers like the Greening of Detroit. Environmental awareness fosters appreciation, inspiration and, maybe, commitment to a green career.

In my career I've met many, many arborists and business owners. One common trait I see is a spirit of independence. You see an opportunity, you start a business, you build a client base, you figure out the finances. When things get tough, you adjust. If you're not self-reliant, you're not in this business very long. However, with the challenges facing our industry today, I would propose that there is one area where we must begin to stand together—supporting tree research and education. We all benefit by having better knowledge about caring for trees, and we all want to ensure a bright future for our industry. That's why I donate to the TREE Fund. I hope you will join me in supporting the TREE Fund in 2014.

