

## Earth Day Dallas 2013

### Fun Climb and Charitree Event

Although Earth Day Dallas' Fun Climb ([www.earthdaydallas.org](http://www.earthdaydallas.org)) is a new event for the Dallas area and a unique first to occur in the state, it was a **huge** success. There was a large crowd around the event both days. Seeing people in trees was a natural magnet that attracted people, in part out of curiosity, but also out of fear that someone could get hurt. As people approached the event, they found everyone laughing, smiling, and whooping or hollering for their friend or relative in a climbing saddle. The event should have been called the Fun and Laughter Climb because many had face muscles as well as side muscles that hurt at the end of both days. There was not a frown to be found around the event and comments overheard included, "This is the coolest event I have ever seen because it is safe as well as fun for even our children to participate.", and "Man, I had a ball. I've gotta do this again next year." Judging by the joy of those around the event, it was clearly a popular attraction enjoyed by folks of all ages. Please be sure to thank the good people at Earth Day Dallas for including this very cool tree event.

Professional tree climbers with Tree Climbers International ([www.treeclimbing.com](http://www.treeclimbing.com)) were hired to conduct the event because of their expertise in tree climbing methods and techniques as well as their years of experience in conducting these types of climbs during the International Tree Climbing Competitions as well as other venues around the nation. Their safety record is still impeccable after 30 years of teaching the public how to safely climb a tree. Over the two-day event, almost 250 children and adults were able to climb up a rope and safely descend back to the ground. Most without getting wedgies!

The first Earth Day Dallas climbing event on Saturday was developed specifically for the children at Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children ([www.tsrhc.org](http://www.tsrhc.org)). We were very fortunate to have the support of the hospital's executive staff as well as the children and parents. We would encourage the public to thank these people for being wise enough to understand what the event would teach the children but also for understanding that an event they had never seen before...was indeed safe. This takes real leadership, which is something many have long admired about the hospital. They are a tremendous asset to the community and words could not begin to describe how these folks as well as their many supporters help our children as well as our area.

A part of the purpose of the tree climb was to show that children can overcome anything when they think positive and stay determined to succeed. They were able to reconnect with nature as well as successfully face the physical and mental challenge that goes with tree climbing. To

the novice, it is important to explain that the most important factor in tree climbing is strength to weight ratio. There were ten children involved and all of them had a reasonable level of upper and lower body strength and were not overweight. Most, if not all of the children, were skeptical and afraid of the heights, the crowd, putting on a saddle, among others. The fact that they were greeted by Patty Jenkins, who walks on crutches due to being post polio, offered some level of comfort. Patty explained to them that she is a climber and if she can do it--they can as well. Peter and Patty Jenkins are the founders and owners of Tree Climbers International. There were six professional climbers in saddles to help each person, and Peter offered their training in a humorous way that helped to increase their comfort level. For those with less physical capacity to climb, a special climbing system was employed that included one or two pulleys to gain a mechanical advantage and multiply their personal strength.



The professional climbers provided personal training for each of the children to get them started up the rope. Parents and spectators, offered further words of encouragement. Although it takes time for an adult to learn how to climb the rope, several children caught on quickly and ascended to the upper end of the rope. The girls realized that girls can do this and sometimes even better than the guys! The boys learned that it does not take great strength, but rather a focused determination as well as a strong will to succeed.



With a mother and small cheering section in tow, one young girl quickly made it to the top and was allowed to climb twice! The second time, she climbed near three other girls that decided to all hold hands at around 18-feet off the ground while they were laughing and giggling the entire time. We requested that they look down and smile for a photo. In a phrase, it was a very heartwarming moment for all those fortunate enough to witness the occurrence. As the event was over, one of the girls returned to the event. Apparently, she had convinced her mother (possibly with the assistance of the other cheering section) to climb with her and take photos of them together in a tree. Money simply could not buy this kind of warmth for someone's heart.



The hope for next year is that Earth Day Dallas officials will continue to support this event and consider including an event for those that faithfully serve our country...our veterans, our police, as well as our fire officials.

The **Charitree** event included the Dallas Mavericks “Mavs Man” as well as their “Street Team” that worked to set up an inflatable basketball court for children to shoot baskets and earn cool Mavs bracelets, posters, and much more ([www.Mavs.com](http://www.Mavs.com)). Although it was not required, the Mav’s Man graciously agreed to climb with us. A number of staff members from NBC/KXAS–TV (Channel 5 News), joined in the fun ([www.nbcdfw.com](http://www.nbcdfw.com)). The event’s Master of Ceremonies, Liddy Bisanz, helped to educate and wind up the crowd as they were rooting for their favorite tree climber. Those that climbed a tree will never see trees in the same light again.





Officials from both groups benefiting from the fundraising portion of the event were on hand. Mary Graves, President of the Dallas Historic Tree Coalition, spoke to the crowd about the group's eighteen-year effort to find, recognize, and celebrate our most significant trees ([www.dhtc.org](http://www.dhtc.org)). Lawrence Hochberg, Vice Chair of the City of Dallas Urban Forest Advisory Committee, spoke about their seven-year effort in public outreach as well as encouraging sound urban forest management practices ([www.dallastrees.org](http://www.dallastrees.org)). Kevin Bassett, Texas Tree Climbing Championship Chair, spoke about the upcoming competition and encouraged attendance. Kirbie Houser, DHTC Treasurer and Trustee, developed a flyer for the event and she was handing them out to those interested.

Liddy Bisanz encouraged a little friendly competition amongst the climbers and urged the crowd to donate to the cause. David Hicks eagerly accepted donations for the event. Those that support trees and forests can still donate to the volunteers in the trenches getting the work done every day by clicking on the following link. <http://www.crowdrise.com/charitree>

A receipt for the donation is automatically sent to your email address, which notes the details of the donation, for your records. Please hit the “like” button on the site and pass along the link to others as well as post it on your Facebook page.

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