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Arborists Climb to the Sky in Pittsburgh 28th International Tree Climbing Championship

CHAMPAIGN, IL (August 24, 2004)- The sky (or at least the tops of the trees) was the limit on August 7 and 8 when the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) held its 28th International Tree Climbing Championship (ITCC) at West Park in Pittsburgh, PA. Bernd Strasser, Gomadingen, Germany; and Kathy Holzer, Seattle, WA, were named male and female international champions.

The event showcased the talents of some of the best tree climbers in the world as they competed for the title of world champion. The competitors are arborists—"professionals in tree care and preservation."

Through these competitions "arborists around the world can learn new techniques from one another and have the opportunity to see new and different equipment" says ISA Executive Director, Jim Skiera.

Competitors from Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand performed five different climbs on Saturday. These climbs demonstrate their ability to quickly, professionally, and safely maneuver in a tree while performing work related tasks.

The top scorers moved on to Sunday's ITCC Masters' Challenge championship round. Four men and two women performed for crowds of spectators as they vied for the title of champion.

Bernd Strasser (five time ITCC champion) won the men's title for the third consecutive year. Strasser emphasizes that one must climb from the heart, "You have to have a love for the tree, not just for climbing." He continues to return to ITCC because of "the warmth with the other climbers, the open hearts, the exchange of ideas, and the increased awareness of trees."

The women's winner, Kathy Holzer, took the title after only her second year at the international competition. After watching the women compete at the Seattle ITCC in 2002, Holzer decided she should compete. "I felt it was my responsibility as a woman in this industry to stand up and show that women can be talented climbers." Competing has also exposed Holzer to new ideas. "The ITCC competition has motivated me to become a better climber."

ITCC champions receive championship buckles, cash, prizes, and the opportunity to return next year to defend their titles. Other competitors who made it to this year's Masters' Challenge are:

- Mark Chisholm; Freehold, NJ, USA
- Frank Chipps; Tofield, Alberta, Canada
- Dan Kraus; Seattle, WA, USA
- Christine Spence; Hamilton, New Zealand

Competitors for the international championship are determined through regional ISA chapter competitions throughout the year. Those winners are invited to compete at the annual ITCC event.

Next year's event will be in Nashville, TN, August 6 and 7. For more details on the International Tree Climbing Competition, and the climbers, visit www.isa-arbor.com/itcc/itcc.asp.

The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) is a nonprofit organization supporting tree care research around the world. Headquartered in Champaign, IL, ISA is dedicated to the care and preservation of shade and ornamental trees. For more information, contact a local ISA Certified Arborist or visit www.treesaregood.com.