



# News and Updates



Winter 2024

## 2024 Annual Conference Recap

**By: Tom Molitor**  
**Past President**

The 2024 AMTOPP Winter Conference was a great event. Mark Chisholm led with the keynote speech about being a true professional, and the whole conference after that followed suit. We led successful tracts in Tree, Turf, Pesticides, and Irrigation. We received an overwhelming amount of positive feedback from the membership. Thanks to our speakers for bringing in new content, and their drive to educate. There are so many opportunities for CEUs, safety programs, and gaining certifications, that one would have to travel a long way to gain the same objectives.

AMTOPP is blessed to have such great vendors and sponsors that are willing to help anywhere to make good things happen. AMTOPP would not be what it is without the support from these great people. The board always works hard to step up the education and experience for our membership. I appreciate the opportunity to serve as the AMTOPP president, and I look forward to helping in the future.

### Conferencee Attendance

Another record breaking year for the conference:

Registrations 177  
Exhibitors 18 total people 38  
Speakers 18  
Companion/Spouse Meals 12  
Total for the conference: 245 (less no shows came to 237)  
EHT class 33 people  
Irrigation Auditor Class 20

## Summer Crane and Climbing Work Shop

**By: Jason Stringer**  
**Director**

AMTOPPERS, Spring has sprung and its time to get back to the grind.

Speaking of the grind. AMTOPP'S board has been grinding away at this year's agenda. The agenda will include a summer crane and climbing workshop.

The workshop will be held on July 12-

13th, 2024 at the county fair grounds in Big Timber, MT. The crane class will be instructed by Pete Nieves-Sosa from The Crane Man Inc.

Additionally, Mark Chisholm from Aspen Tree Expert Company will be instructing as well.

The crane class will have two teams. Pete will lead the stick crane team and Mark will lead the knuckle boom crane

team. Each team will have 8 active in tree participants and 4 observers. So, be sure to keep a eye out for registration , as the class has limited enrollment.

The climbing workshop will be instructed by Dave Stice and Nick Merriaman. The workshop will include aerial rescue and a beginner to mid-level climbing class.

## And the Winners Are!!

One night stay at Fairmont with \$100 gift certificate -  
Dudley Marburger  
\$300 Gift Card - Kenny Houle  
\$700 Gift Card - Tammy Young

Kenny Houle won the 50/50 (\$1,241) - taking \$621 of which he gave \$100 back to AMTOPP! Thanks Kenny!

Jordan Hesper won the AMTOPP \$1,000 Scholarship which he is applying toward getting his CDL.  
Good luck Jordan.

Gavyn Brubaker won the Ice Breaker game and took home \$100 in cash. Way to go Gavyn!

Pat Plantenberg won the door prize given away by Intermountain STIHL. Pat donated it back to be auctioned off and requested the proceeds go to the Scholarship Fund.

Jason Stringer won the auction of the door prize with a bid of \$950!  
Thanks Pat and Jason!

Congratulations to all the winners!  
Thank you for supporting the Scholarship Fund with the raffle ticket purchase.

# President's Message



By the time you read this, spring will have officially arrived, at least according to the calendar. I trust everyone's spring is getting off to a good start. I know I am looking forward to another great year.

As customary, the Board is busy securing high caliber educational opportunities for the next conference and a summer event. Seeing all the familiar faces and many new faces at this year's conference was enjoyable. I love seeing all the networking and people engrossed in learning new things. We appreciate all the speakers and those of you who came, making it a successful conference.

For many years, sending the President and Vice President to Washington, DC, to be a part of the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) Day on the Hill and Renewal and Remembrance has been a practice. However, since 2020, as with many other events, this event has stopped, and now it has been restructured. We are looking to restart the practice for a Day on The Hill, adding our (your voice) to other voices in our industry for strength in numbers. We will meet with our representatives to discuss issues that affect us all in the green industry. It is vital to keep a presence in Washington, DC, with our national partners (NALP) and our lawmakers to ensure we don't lose essential tools we rely on to provide our business services. Please let Owen Nickol, Vice President, or me know if you have any concerns you want us to discuss with lawmakers.

With the success of the summer workshops held over the past few years, we are looking to expand the hands on experiences. This year, we are expanding our summer workshop into a summer mini confer

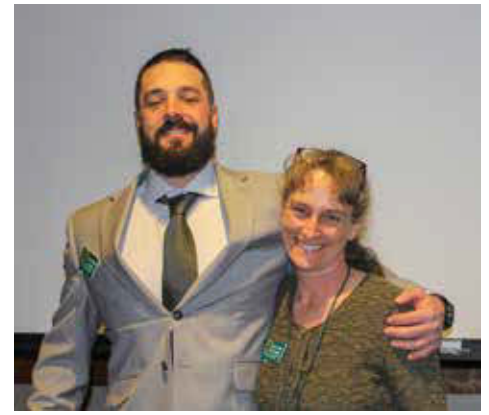
ence. We are looking at various outdoor classes/training and will soon be firming up details. We are considering offering a few training classes, such as aerial rescue, crane class, rigging, and other classes for Department of Ag credits. We will announce everything as soon as we can confirm speakers, topics, sponsors, locations, and fees.

The Board has been a delight to work with.

The excitement about bringing high caliber training to Montana and the surrounding area has been a joy. It requires a sacrifice of time and personal finances, but anything worth doing requires sacrifice.

We look forward to seeing what this year brings for the AMTOPP membership. Thank you all for being a part of something that makes us all better together.

Lydia Heser  
2024 President



*Passing of the gavel 2023 President (l) Tom Molitor with incoming President, Lydia Heser*



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## Synopsis of Board Meeting 1/26/24

**By: James Roberts**  
**Secretary/Treasurer**

Hello! Thank you to everyone who attended the 2024 AMTOPP Conference. It was another record breaker for attendance! I also wanted to say thank you to all our members for allowing me the opportunity to serve you as our Secretary/Treasurer this year.

The first board meeting of the 2024 Board of Directors occurred immediately after the conference at Fairmont. New and returning board members took a minute to introduce themselves then we dove into the Evaluation Sheets filled out during the conference. The Evaluation Sheets allow the Board to gauge, from member input, what worked and what didn't work in regard to speakers, topics, and the overall layout of the conference. We then can work to improve next year's conference.

The next item of business was discussing the upcoming year. Each board member discussed their goals and how they wanted to see AMTOPP improve as the year went on. We also discussed ways of improving our use of committees and becoming more

efficient at board meetings.

Next, we set dates and locations for upcoming board meetings and training days. These dates will be provided in the newsletter and emails throughout the year. Be on the lookout for these pieces of information!

Rob Dillon and Travis with Tree Amigos, who assisted with delivering the food to the Anaconda Food Bank, stopped by towards the end of the meeting to report the total pounds donated to the food drive was 647 lbs. of food plus \$100 cash donation. Thank you to everyone who donated!

Our first meeting of the season was a productive one. We had a fair number of guests attend this meeting which was great to see. I encourage anyone who is interested in serving, or would just like to attend a meeting, to please do so! Feel free to contact me if you have any questions, or suggestions, for the board.

contact:  
jmr.trugreen@gmail.com

## Synopsis of Board Meeting 3/29/24

**By: James Roberts**  
**Secretary/Treasurer**

The AMTOPP Board of Directors reconvened at the Missoula County Extension office for the 2024 Spring Board Meeting. We had another meeting with great attendance and participation from our guests. Guest participation and feedback helps the board become aware of issues affecting our members and allows us to cater our training and events to what our members need. I highly encourage anyone who is interested in serving or would like to see how AMTOPP operates to feel free and stop by a meeting!

We started off the meeting by hearing from our guests. They introduced themselves and provided great feedback on what they would like to see from AMTOPP this year.

The next item of business was setting up our board calendar for the year. This calendar includes events, deadlines, and scheduled meetings. This will help the board stay on schedule during the upcoming year and make sure we are completing our tasks and assignments when they are due.

We then continued to work on our committees and committee assignments from our previous meeting. All board members have

been assigned to their committees and we look forward to getting to work within each one.

After discussing committees, we moved on to new business. New business topics mostly included upcoming events. We are always working on the conference year around, but in addition we also plan other educational and volunteer events throughout the summer. Keep an eye out for additional dates in the newsletter and email. We also continued work on adding speakers and topics to the 2025 conference.

Another item we have been discussing over the past few weeks is the AMTOPP website. We are currently deciding if a new website is needed. In the meantime, check out the updated AMTOPP website!

A lot of work was done, and a lot of great discussion happened at the Spring Board Meeting. We look forward to continuing to serve our members and continuing to make AMTOPP the best organization in the green industry! If you have any questions or suggestions for the board, feel free to reach out to me or any board member.

Happy Spring!  
contact:  
jmr.trugreen@gmail.com

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**By: Dudley Marburger  
Director**

This event happened in my early years climbing trees. I had moved back to Arizona from Los Angeles where I had been working for Davey Tree. I started as an instructor with Davey Environmental (now defunct). Moved into the line clearance division and then ran their private division in LA. I was line clearance certified at the time of this story.

The scope of the job was to reduce a large eucalyptus tree in the back yard and clear the primaries in the alley. I was admittedly young and still unafraid. In my silver years I would call the local electric company and have them get the clearance before doing my share. At the time it was just another challenge.

This tree had been poorly pruned on the line clearance side with large stubs. Of these stubs long sprouts about twenty feet in length and four inches in girth had grown towards the power lines. I climbed high and tied in on the

safe side of the tree. I also set a bull line to be used to direct said limbs away from the power lines. The thought was to have my ground man hold the bull line tied about half way up the sprouts. I would hinge the cut to direct the limb and have it slide down the side of the tree on the same line as the power. The bull line would keep it from hitting the power and dropping on the fence under the tree.

A good plan on paper, so we started the operation. Taking a limb at a time, everything was going smoothly. I climbed the limb, tied it off and the ground man took up the slack. I hinged the limb as the rope was eased out while the limb cleared the wires. Then I would take the bull line while the man below would direct the limb off the fence. They weren't super big limbs, just long and slippery. My clove hitches were holding just fine as we worked methodically.

Almost done with the last limb left. I set the bull line. Got in position to make the cut.

Start the cut when a very gentle breeze comes up. Just barely enough to catch the leafy end of the limb and overpower the man on the ground. Toward the primaries. The limb crossed over both the negative and positive lines while I am in mid cut. Sparks fly, energy surges into the limb which I am still in contact with. I feel it entering my body through my arms. My hand clamps down on the saw at full throttle. My body is frozen in place. The inertia of the saw finishes the cut and breaks the contact. It seemed to last forever but I am sure it was seconds. I was free of the power but the limb was still across the lines. This time we did blow the transformer.

I was lucky that day. There was just enough length to the limb to slow the power enough so my saw could finish the cut and break contact on its own. I won't say that was the last time I worked around power, but I gained a deep respect for the consequences when things go sideways.

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2023 Board of Directors: Back row L to R: Trevor McKeith; James Roberts; Steve Jonas; Tom Molitor; Chris Galanti; Front row L to R: Jason Stringer; Garrett Dotson; Dudley Marburger; Cooper Elwood; Lydia Hesar; Owen Nickol



Outgoing Secretary/Treasurer Owen Nickol presents James Roberts, 2024 Secretary/Treasurer, with a Briefcase.



Tom Molitor (l) with James Roberts receives the Traveling Trophy High Bidder award for 2023.

### New Members



### 15 Year Members



Pat Plantenburg won the door prize donated by Intermountain STIHL, a battery powered chain saw with accessories. Pat donated back to be auctioned with the proceeds to be applied to the Scholarship fund. Jason Stringer, Tere Amigs won the bid.

### 5 Year Members



### 20 Year Members



### Diamond Sponsor

### 25 Year Members



### 30 Year Member



Intermountain STIHL Diamond Sponsor Award:(left) Shan Jones, Tom Molitor (AMTOPP), Danny Lamb and Quincy Jones (STIHL).

Thank you Intermountain STIHL!



(l) Tom Molitor 2023 President with winner of the \$700 Raffle Prize, Tammy Young, Young's Tree and Forestry.



(l) Tom Molitor 2023 President with winner of the One night at Fairmont & \$100 Raffle Prize, Dudley Margurber, Dudley's Trees Inc.



(l) Tom Molitor 2023 President with winner of the \$300 Raffle Prize, Kenny Houle, TruGreen Billings

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## Let's do this!

No really, what have you been waiting for? Today's the day to officially become an Arborwear partner. (We apologize in advance for any unsolicited hugs.)

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[ktierney@arborwear.com](mailto:ktierney@arborwear.com) or call  
808.265.1125

# Sponsor



## Rob Dillon Added To Honorary Members

Rob Dillon of Robert Dillon Tree Service was voted in as the newest member to receive Honorary Member status. Rob, a past president, didn't end his contributions to AMTOPP when his term ended, but continued providing, promoting, and being a valuable resource for the board to call on in time of need. He is always willing to offer his time and resources to help AMTOPP anyway he can. His dedication is greatly appreciated.



Sam Strickland, of All Things Green LLC was voted in as Honorary Members in 2023, the day before the conference. He was to receive his plaque during the 2024 conference, but due to illness he was unable to attend. Arrangements were made to present him with his plaque and is pictured here with Rob Dillon, as they show off their Honorary Member plaques. Thank you both for your dedication and commitment to AMTOPP.

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*What's Coming Up?*

**July 12-13** - Mini Summer Conference - Crane School, Climbing Workshop, other things still in the works: Big Timber - Pre Registration Required and will be out soon.

**August** - Quarterly Board Meeting - Bozeman - location to be determined and announced later. - 10AM

**October 25** - Quarterly Board Meeting - Helena - location to be determined and announced later. - 10AM

**January 29, 2025** - Pre-Conference Board Meeting - Fairmont, 5:00 PM

## 2024 President's Award

**By: Tom Molitor**  
**2023 President**

AMTOPP has been doing its part as an organization to assist the Tree and Landscape industry in Montana seek higher training and professionalism.

When I began to think about who would be a good candidate for the AMTOPP President's award, it was not a hard decision.

Dave Stice has been a big part of

making AMTOPP the organization what it has become. Training is not Dave's job, nor just his career. Training is Dave's calling. Any time we have asked for Dave's help, the answer is yes. The details and logistics come later. His dedication to our industry, and willingness to make good things happen make him a staple in our industry.

Thank you for everything you do for us, Dave.



### **You're invited to the 2024 Montana Native Plant Conservation Conference Restoration of Native Plant Communities**

**Thursday-Friday, April 11-12**

**Montana State University Bozeman -Student Union Bldg.**

The conference is a biennial project of the Montana Native Plant Society, addressing emerging issues in applied botany for managers, scientists, students and plant enthusiasts. Thursday, the conference will hear from speakers and tour the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve. Friday will be spent updating the information about threats to Montana's plant Species of Concern.

**Fees: MNPS members: \$20; Non-members: \$25;  
Students: \$5**

*Sponsors: -Montana Native Plant Society - Montana  
Natural Heritage Program - USDA Forest Service  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service*

Visit the website to see the full list of presenters, and to register (walk-in participants are also very welcome):  
<https://mtnativeplants.org/conservation-conference/>



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# Years Of Service Awards

Company Name	Contact	City	Years of Service
AJ Bowers	AJ Bowers	Livingston	New Member
Birdsong Conservatioin	Eric Witmer	Missoula	New Member
Brooks Arborist & Tree Services LLC	Job Brooks	Helena	New Member
Cascade County Weed & Mosquito Division	Joshua Bylstone	Great Falls	New Member
City of Columbi Falls	Nathan Riley	Columbia Falls	New Member
City of Whitefish	Jen Sybrant	Whitefish	New Member
CM Tree Service and Removal LLC	Mike Nezworski	Billings	New Member
Libby Tree Care	Nolan Broden	Libby	New Member
Mann Landscape and Sprinklers	Thomas Mann	Kalispell	New Member
Meier Farm & Orchards	Corey Meier	Dillon	New Member
Montana Pest Solutioins	Vida Rasoolzadegan	Missoula	New Member
Old Pro Tree Management	James Gallahar	Great Falls	New Member
Over The Top Tree Service	Jeremiah Roberts	Butte	New Member
Plant Land	Dustin Sharbono	Kalispell	New Member
ST Lawn and Mosquito	Stone Tihista	Nashua	New Member
Town of Westby	Jeff Ekness	Westby	New Member
Tree Mechanics LLC	Natasha Dotson	Buffalo, WY	New Member
Winchell Landscaping, Inc.	Robert Worden	Billings	New Member
Dillon Tree Care	Marc Sanders	Dillon	5 Years
Fairmont Hot Springs Resort	Bryan Aman	Fairmont	5 Years
Blue Ribbon Tree Service	Joshua Pomeroy	Powell, WY	5 Years
Haynes Enterprises LLC	Spencer Haynes	Miles City	5 Years
Okamoto Arbor Care, LLC	Brian Okamoto	Kalispell	5 Years
Oxen Tree Service	Owen Nickol	Ronan	5 Years
Thompson Tree Care LLC	Michael Thompson	Great Falls	5 Years
Dudley's Trees Inc	Dudley Marburger	Kalispell	15 Years
Jennison Tree Service	Rick Jennison	Ronan	15 Years
The Personal Gardener	Richard Hathaway	Bozeman	20 Years
H & J Landscaping LLC	Anna Deonier	Billings	20 Years
Evergreen Landscaping & Irrigation LLC	Zac Mader	Miles City	25 Years
Montana State University Facilities	Cheryl McDonald	Bozeman	25 Years
City of Bozeman Forestry Division	Alex Nordquest	Bozeman	30 Years

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# From Our Affiliates

*Submitted By Patrick Plantenberg  
MUCFA Chair*

In January, at the Association of Montana Turf, Ornamental, and Pest Professionals (AMTOPP) Conference in Fairmont Hot Springs, Trees for Life from Bigfork sent all of its 12 employees to the conference for arboricultural training. Five of its employees tested and became International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) certified arborists.

At the conference, the Montana Ur-

ban and Community Forestry Association (MUCFA) recognized Trees for Life as the 2023 Outstanding Montana Urban Forestry Company "for Advancing the Profession of Tree Care by Promoting ISA Certification for your Employees and for being an Advocate for Promoting Arboricultural Education within Your Company and the State of Montana".

With eleven ISA Certified Arborists on its crew, Trees for Life strives to perform and promote the highest quality tree work in the Flathead and Swan valleys



*MUCFA Chair, Patrick Plantenberg (right), presents the Outstanding Urban Forestry Company Award to Skyler Doak (left) and Alec MacCallum (center) owners of Trees for Life in Bigfork.*

## AMTOPP Scholarship

The AMTOPP Scholarship will be offered again in 2025. The application is on the website under Scholarships.

Employees of member companies qualify for applying for the Scholarship.

This Scholarship will not take away from the existing 4H and FFA Scholarship, but will be added to the program.

Complete the application, and return it to the AMTOPP office by January 5. It can be emailed or if mailed it must be postmarked by January 5.

All the applications received will go into a drawing that will be held the last day of the conference.

The winner will receive a check within 30 days after the conference.

No late applications will be received, all must be in by or postmarked by January 5.

If you have any questions regarding the application or the process, please contact the AMTOPP office: (406) 204-0100 or [amtopp@amtopp.org](mailto:amtopp@amtopp.org).

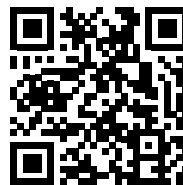
## 2024 AMTOPP Scholarship Winner



*Jordan Hesel  
Hesel Tree Service*

## FaceBook

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## Ice Breaker Winner



*Gavyan Brubaker,  
Greenleaf Landscape Management*

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## 50/50 Winner



*Kenny Houle (center) winner of 50/50; (l) Tom Molitor (l), James Roberts (r)*

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## 2024 OFFICERS - Executive Board

**President** -Lydia Hesel, Hesel Tree Service; (406) 740-0931; clheser@gmail.com; Term Expires 2026

**Vice President** - Owen Nickol; Oxen Tree Services (406) 270-1506; oxen@ronan.net; Term Expires 1/2027

**Secretary/Treasurer** -James Roberts, TruGreen; (406) 860-9443; @gmail.com: Term Expires 1/2028

**Past President** -Tom Molitor, Big Twig Tree Care; (406) 600-9365; tom@bigtwigtreecare.com; Term Expires: 2025

## DIRECTORS

Steve Jonas, Jonas Sprinklers and Fertilizer; (406) 216-2281; stevejonas84@gmail.com: Term Expires 1/2025

Jason Stringer, Tree Amigos Tree Service; 406) 268-8733; jcstringer12365@msm.com; Term Expires 1/2026

Cooper Elwood, Mountain Tree Company; (406) 529-0185; coopere@gmail.com; Term Expires: 2027

Chris Galanti, Galanti Lawn & Landscape; (406) 212-4850; chris@galantilandscaping.com: Term Expires 2/2027

Garrett Dotson, Rocky Mountain Tree & Turf Supply; (307) 620-9469; garrett@treemechanicsllc.com; Term Expires 2/2027

Dudley Marburger, Dudley's Trees; 406-212-3391; dudleystrees@centurytel.net; Term Expires: 2028

Mike Nezworski, CM Tree Service & Removal; (406) 876-3722; mike@cmtreemt.com; Term Expires 2/28

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Trudie Southwick - amtopp@amtopp.org - (406) 204-0100

amtopp@amtopp.org

**AMTOPP**

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