

# President's MESSAGE



## Step Up

Greetings from Tittletown. I'm hoping your Arbor Day celebrations went off as planned, your plantings are beginning to flourish, and the Green Bay Packers' new draft choices are ready to step up to the next level to bring us a Super Bowl victory that will allow Brett to finally ride off into the sunset in high style on his fabled career.

It has been fun to look back at Brett's career and watch as he developed as a player and grew as a person. What has been just as fun for me, recently, is to look back on the development of the Wisconsin Arborist Association.

Who would have thought that back in 1965 a small group of tree huggers would plant the seeds of an association that is now over 700 members strong, becoming a leader in our state's green industry as well as one of the finest and most respected chapters within ISA? Just a few years ago we celebrated and promoted our 40th year as an association. Unlike sports teams that rise and fall like the moon, the WAA keeps on growing stronger and stepping up to the next level every chance we get.

It is easy for me to see why we have been so successful as the years go by; it's because of our dedicated members, always willing to step up to the next level to keep WAA in the forefront of the industry. And just like a solid tree, our association grows and evolves one branch at a time.

We previously had a stand-alone annual conference, but now partner with the DNR to give our members a much stronger educational program. There was a time when we did not have a tree climbing championship or that there was very little interest in the competition. Now we have to put a limit on the amount of climbers that can enter and require a first-come, first-serve basis to compete.

Our finance committee stepped up to the next level and instituted credit card payment for our membership. The editorial committee gave the newsletter a newer, fresher and cleaner look, and our Web site is continuously kept current by our dedicated volunteers.

Our time has come to strengthen another branch in our association and we need your help. Several years ago the WAA stepped up to another level when we became involved in the production of the Green Industry Survey. The publication was designed as an informational tool to be used to educate state legislators, politicians and fellow green industry partners as to the 2.7 billion dollar economic impact our industry has in the state of Wisconsin.

In February of 2005, 40 of the 200 participants of the first green industry "Day on the Hill" were WAA members. We not only opened a few eyes and doors on "capitol hill" that day, we stepped up and told our fellow industry members that the WAA is the voice of arboriculture in Wisconsin.

Our professional commitment to arboriculture has not gone unnoticed. The WDATCP, WDNR, UW-Ext, APHIS, USFS, cities, towns, villages, politicians and residents are looking to the WAA for guidance and expertise in dealing with the upcoming EAB infestation. Our time is now, to step up and strengthen another branch in our association that is called political influence.

Through the wonderful advancements of technology and two years of hard work, our database manager, Eric Muecke, has figured out a way in which every member with e-mail capabilities can receive instant notification of issues that affect our association and industry. The next time you receive an e-mail from the WAA asking you to support an issue, please take a few minutes of your day to click on the provided link and let the intended target know where you stand on the issue.

We have the possibility of 470 members letting our elected officials know how we feel in an instant. The number 470 may seem small when compared to the number of ash growing in this state, but on capitol hill, 470 voices is called a huge political influence that we better listen to.

A famous quote from Margaret Mead is as follows, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." The next time the WAA asks for your voice, please help us step up to the next level.

Thank you for your time and commitment to the WAA.

*Mark Freberg, WAA President*