

# Dan Kraus: Tree Climbing Champion and Cat Rescuer

By Nadia Geagea



**It's not always true that a cat stuck in a tree will find its way back down.**

Rescue Service began seven years and 500 cat rescues ago, when he received a call from a distressed customer asking for help.

"It dawned on me that someone with a cat that has been stuck for days at the top of a tree has no one to call for help," says Kraus.

Not only has Kraus been rescuing cats, but he's also rescued birds, iguanas, baby squirrels, and even model planes. When Kraus is out of town, he has a few friends who help him out with rescues; however, he emphasizes that this sort of job is not for the amateur climber.

"Sometimes a cat will go where no person should go," he says. "Rescues range from embarrassingly easy to insanely dangerous.

Sometimes the cat is at the very top of a 100-foot tree with the wind blowing. Sometimes I have to climb a neighboring tree and swing over to the cat's tree."

Kraus is currently looking for good climbers who are willing to help people rescue their cats from trees. In fact, he's putting together a nationwide directory on his Cat-in-a-Tree Rescue Web site (currently in development), which will help people find someone to help them, wherever they live.

He tries to keep his rates low (about \$75 per rescue), because he views cat rescues as a service to the community.

"Many people are very attached to their cats and consider it a member of their family," says Kraus. "The gratitude I get from someone who has been worried sick over their cat for three or four days can be very heartwarming."

The most memorable rescue for Kraus was for a five-year-old girl who "really loved her cat." The girl's cat had gotten stuck in a tree the night before her birthday party. She

"I didn't know how many cats I would be rescuing, but I knew it would be a little adventure each time," says ISA's 2005 international tree climbing champion, Dan Kraus.

Dan's Cat-in-a-Tree

cried herself to sleep hearing her cat crying outside. The next day at her party, the cat's cries were still in the air, and the girl could think of nothing else. Kraus cannot remember how the owners found his number, but when he arrived at the party, he became an instant hero.

The cat rescue service, which is based in Washington state, has been a huge success. Kraus simply loves being able to save the day whenever he can.

"I am always willing to stop what I'm doing or travel through traffic after work to get someone's cat," he says. "My wife tells me that superheroes keep bad hours."



**Dan Kraus, tree climbing champion and hero to cat lovers.**

## Why SavATree? Careers that climb higher.



### *Mike Schoeni, Branch Mgr.*

"I started in a field position, then moved up through the ranks to become the branch manager of our third largest facility. This is a company that rewards ambitious, hard-working people who truly care about the environment."



Offices in CT, DC, MA, MD, NJ, NY, PA & VA.  
Please fax or email your resume to  
914-242-3934 / careers@savatree.com  
www.savatree.com

Circle 156 on Reader Service card or go to [www.isa-arbor.com/readerresponse/](http://www.isa-arbor.com/readerresponse/)



Along with his cat rescue business, Kraus is well-known for taking part in tree climbing competitions. "I haven't missed a year of competing since I started 16 years ago," he says.

Recently, Kraus helped a group of redwood researchers collect needles from the tallest redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) on earth. Kraus and the researchers climbed into a canopy 300 feet above the ground. After an entire day devoted to research, Tobe Sherrill, one of the participants, suggested spending the night in one of the trees.

"Three of us borrowed port-a-ledges and sleeping bags from the researchers and carried them up, along with some good eats, to the top of two giants," says Kraus. "We set up camp at about 350 feet and just chilled out, watching the light change at the top of the forest."

Kraus's deep appreciation for trees began at a young age while working for his father, who owned a tree care company. "I learned quickly that the way to get respect from my father and crew was to work hard and not whine about it," he says.

Kraus worked his way through college by doing various types of tree work, and he practically fell in love with climbing along the way. When he officially competed at the age of 24, he was able to meet "Veteran climbers like Bob Weber, Gary Abrogena, and Robert Phillips."

Last summer, Kraus worked with the National Response Access Team in Louisiana to educate and enforce safety rules for crew members who were doing cleanup work after Hurricane Katrina. He has also led climbing classes that offer hands-on demonstrations and practice. By doing so, Kraus sets an example for other climbers to see that "you don't have to cut corners and take chances to be a good climber."

In spite of all those activities, he remains devoted to helping cat owners rescue their pets. According to Kraus, the myth that a cat will eventually climb back down on its own

is unfounded. If the cat is less than a year old, then it should be rescued as soon as possible. Likewise, a cat that is frightened might not come down willingly, and cats that have had their front claws removed can climb up trees but might have trouble climbing down.

*Nadia Geagea is a recent graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is serving an internship at ISA.*

## For Expert Vegetation Management Call The Wright People!

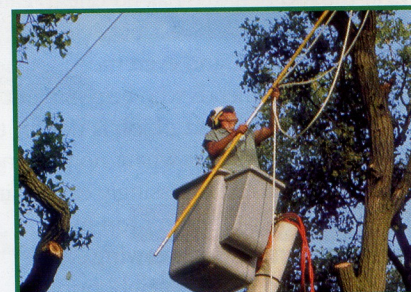
- Line Clearance
- Mechanical Line Clearing
- Right-Of-Way Mowing
- Land Clearing
- Herbicide Application
- Substation Restoration and Maintenance
- Commercial and Residential Tree Care

Whatever the situation, an emergency or routine line clearance, our utility customers know they can count on Wright Tree Service to get the job done — quickly, efficiently and safely. From the Rocky Mountains to the Great Lakes, from Canada to the tip of Texas, we're the Wright people for your job! Call or write for our capabilities brochure or visit our website.



*Employee Owned*

WRIGHT TREE SERVICE  
P. O. Box 1718  
Des Moines, IA 50306  
[www.wrighttree.com](http://www.wrighttree.com)



**"Call me for  
immediate  
action!"**

— Scott Packard, President/CEO



**1-800-882-1216**



Circle 157 on Reader Service card or go to [www.isa-arbor.com/readerresponse/](http://www.isa-arbor.com/readerresponse/)