



DFFM sends Phoenix Arborist to the ISA Western Chapter Women's Tree Climbing Workshop

By: Megan Lasley, Conservation Education Coordinator

Our Urban and Community Forestry team was so excited to sponsor Celina McGregor to attend the ISA Western Chapter Women's Tree Climbing Workshop (WTCW) in Colorado over the summer of 2022! Born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona, Celina is a 29-year old local who has had a passion for trees since participating in Mesa Community College's Horticulture Program, from which she graduated in 2013. Celina has worked a variety of jobs in the area: from being on the horticulture team at the Phoenix Zoo, which is the first place she climbed a tree, to the Japanese Friendship Garden, where she learned a lot about the Japanese culture and Eastern style pruning. She now is pursuing arborist work full-time, and currently works as a part of a team of two doing tree work for her community.

The duo have been working together to take as many jobs as they can. Celina has primarily done the groundwork, so attending this climbing workshop was a huge step towards achieving her goal of working on her own. The workshop gave Celina the technical training and confidence that are necessary for accepting jobs which include this dangerous task.



Figure 1: Celina (left) at the workshop!



Figure 2: Women testing different tree climbing gear.

In order to safely perform tree climbing work, you also need to have the right gear and proper equipment. While extremely important, this gear is quite expensive - making it difficult for individuals to obtain, especially when working for themselves. The WTCW gave Celina and many other women the chance to try out many different types of gear, different brands, and rope compatibility - an incredible opportunity to have before making such a purchase and advancement in their careers.

There is still a stigma around being a woman in the tree care industry. It is harder for women to get hired, and this workshop was actually the first time Celina got to meet other women in her line of work. There were people from all over the world who attended in the cohort of about 30 who attended. On top of the hard skills gained, Celina gained a network - a community of folks she can reach out to for encouragement, collaboration, and inspiration. She didn't realize how important this was until attending this workshop.

“At so many moments I was able to look around at a room full of people JUST LIKE ME. That has never happened before! I had never met another female arborist or tree climber, and in the blink of an eye I was surrounded with them. I not only gained an entire season’s worth of knowledge and skill - I also gained 30+ new lifelong friends.”
- Celina McGregor

We were so happy to hear how positive Celina’s experience was. The confidence boost from this workshop has really pushed her forward in her career and has made her even more excited to work with trees! Can you believe that she was originally terrified of heights? Celina’s story inspires us to challenge ourselves, face our fears, and pave the way for a more inclusive, diverse tree care workforce.



Figure 3: One of the other awesome arborists Celina met at the workshop, looking as comfortable as ever in the canopy!

With urban trees providing our communities with numerous health and environmental benefits, it's time to bring more people, more perspectives, and more knowledge to the tree care industry in Arizona. The Urban and Community Forestry team hopes to continue to direct funding to sponsoring professional development opportunities for folks like Celina who are outside caring for our growing canopy every day.

Thank you for being an Arizona Urban Forestry Superhero, Celina!