



Hon. Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.  
Essex County Executive and  
the Board of Chosen Freeholders



For Immediate Release

**ESSEX COUNTY BRANCH BROOK PARK TO HOST 26<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
NEW JERSEY STATE TREE CLIMBING CHAMPIONSHIP**  
*Mark Chisholm of Jackson, NJ, will compete against arborists from all over the state  
to defend his 17-year championship title*

(DATE: Newark, NJ) On Saturday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, arborists from all over New Jersey will compete in the 26<sup>th</sup> annual tree climbing championship held by the state chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture. This year, 25 participants are expected to climb trees of heights up to 85-90 feet tall as the competition is held for the first time in Essex County Branch Brook Park in Newark and Belleville.

“We’re thrilled to have this unique competition here at Essex County Branch Brook Park,” said Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. “The arborists are showing us all yet another great way to have fun here in the park, while at the same time highlighting the need to take care of these precious natural resources.”

“All of the competitors are arborists who work for a variety of tree care companies throughout the state. These events are designed to simulate the services these professionals perform every day of the year maintaining their clients’ trees,” says Scott Tapp, President of the Society’s New Jersey chapter.

The man to beat is Mark Chisholm, who has held the title of New Jersey Champion Tree Climber for 17 years in a row. He is a third generation arborist who works in his family business, the Aspen Tree Expert Company in Jackson, NJ. Chisholm has been climbing trees since the age of twelve, and is considered to be one of the most consistent competitors in the world. He currently holds the world record in the 50-foot secured foot lock event with a time of 13.8 seconds; considered to be the event that requires the highest level of athletic ability, the foot lock tests the competitor’s ability to ascend directly up a rope to a height of 50 feet using only his hands and feet.

The male and female winners on Saturday will go on to represent the New Jersey Arborists Chapter at the International Tree Climbing Competition in Chicago, IL this summer.

The skills tested in these aerial contests include speed, accuracy, and finesse. Events include a speed climb, where the climber is timed as he ascends to the top of a tree where he sounds an air horn to let the judges know he is done; a rope hanging competition, where competitors use a “throw line” to hang ropes in tree crotches ranging from 55 to 75 feet up in the crown; and a simulated aerial rescue where the climber “saves” a dummy that was “injured” in the tree and needs assistance getting to the ground.

The NJAISA (New Jersey Arborists Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture) chose Essex County Branch Brook Park for the competition this year as part of an on-going partnership with Branch Brook Park Alliance and Essex County, which sponsored their volunteer workday in late 2009. In December, NJAISA provided 135 chapter members for a day of donated tree care for the trees in Essex County’s historic park at an estimated value of approximately \$125,000 worth of tree removals and maintenance pruning.

“No damage will be done to trees as all participants are professional arborists whose mission is to care for trees,” said Tapp. While working aloft is inherently dangerous, these properly trained climbers are secured at all times with safety lines and harnesses. Prior to the event, participants will prune and safeguard the trees that will be used during the event.

There will be separate divisional competitions for both men and women. All participants must be NJAISA members and carry the appropriate insurance. Those interested in entering the competition can contact Steve Chisholm at [aspentree1@hotmail.com](mailto:aspentree1@hotmail.com) or go to the ISA website at [www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com) for details.

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*Through an extraordinary public/private partnership, the Branch Brook Park Alliance and the Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs work collaboratively to restore and help program the Park for the enjoyment of thousands of children and families who utilize it each year.*