



Winkler's
TREE SERVICE Since 1975

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Winkler's Tree Service Story

In 1974, Vince Winkler started Winkler's Tree Service, Inc with a partner, a couple of part-time employees and one truck. The partner's gone, but the business has grown. Honored with international awards for excellence, the business now has 40 full-time, year round employees and two locations: LaGrange Park and Naperville.

Winkler actually started in the tree business as a sophomore in high school, when he took a part-time job with a local tree service. He worked summers and vacations for the company, earning his way through Sr. Joseph High School and Western Illinois University. While in college, he took every course he could that had anything to do with trees, but Western Illinois did not offer a forestry degree. For that, he would have had to transfer schools. Footing his own education bills he feared losing credits. "I probably have the equivalent of 30 college hours (in tree related courses)," he says. Once out of school, he took advantage of as many continuing education classes as possible, eventually earning his Certified Arborist designation. He proudly points to his low certificate number: IL037.

Single and living at home with no responsibilities, he had a unique opportunity to take some chances and grow his business. Within a short time, he bought a second truck and hired a few more people. At first most of his jobs came from a newspaper advertisement he placed. But gradually more and more were referrals from satisfied customers. Now, the children of some of his original customers are calling him to care for the trees in their own homes. In fact one recently approached him, saying, "I'm surprised you don't remember me." Winkler didn't, but the young man reminded him that as a youngster he had been so annoying that Winkler finally took him by the hand, walked him to the house, knocked on the door, and delivered the lad to his mother.

Winkler's business now is split almost evenly between residential and commercial customers. Winkler's Tree Service, Inc offers tree removal, trimming, cabling and rodding, as well as spraying and injecting.

In the last few years, the company has garnered several awards from the Tree Care Industry Association. Last year, it was honored with an International Award for Excellence in Arboriculture, noted especially for its "exemplary customer service and unwavering dedication to high quality tree maintenance." In 2001, Winkler's Tree Service was one of 19 winners worldwide of the Excellence in Arboriculture Award of Distinction. In 2000, it was one of two companies to be singled out with a Safety Award from the National Arborist Association. Winkler's won the Good Guy Award from the Chicago Tribune, Best Pick Award winner from 2011 & 2012. Winkler's is also, a winner of the 2010 Super Service Award from Angie's List.

Winkler credits his employees for doing the job so well that the company can continue to grow and prosper. General foreman Parnell Barner has been with Winkler for more than 20 years. He oversees everything in the field and "keeps everything running", Winkler says. The office manager is Laurie Obediah, who has worked for the company for nearly 13 years. Her personality is such that "everybody wants to talk to her," he says. Shannon Winkler, administrative assistant, works alongside Obediah. She pays attention to detail. "She never misses a beat" Winkler says. Sales manager Tim Shepard joined Winkler three years ago, but already he has distinguished himself. Winkler's wife, Joan, has been with the business since their oldest daughter was born. He and his wife have two daughters, Diana is a teacher and Shannon works in the office.

From time to time, Winkler's offices are festooned with plaques from the six or seven park district Little League and church baseball and basketball teams the company sponsors. He displays them for a while, and then returns them to the youngsters who earned them. In addition, the company donates to various church and school fund raisers.

ILCA members since 1995 Winkler and employees always attend Mid-Am, as well as some other events. He also sends some of his employees to various tree-oriented seminars and workshops. When he is not working, Winkler can be found boating on Chain-of-Lakes or cheering on the Chicago White Sox with his family.

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