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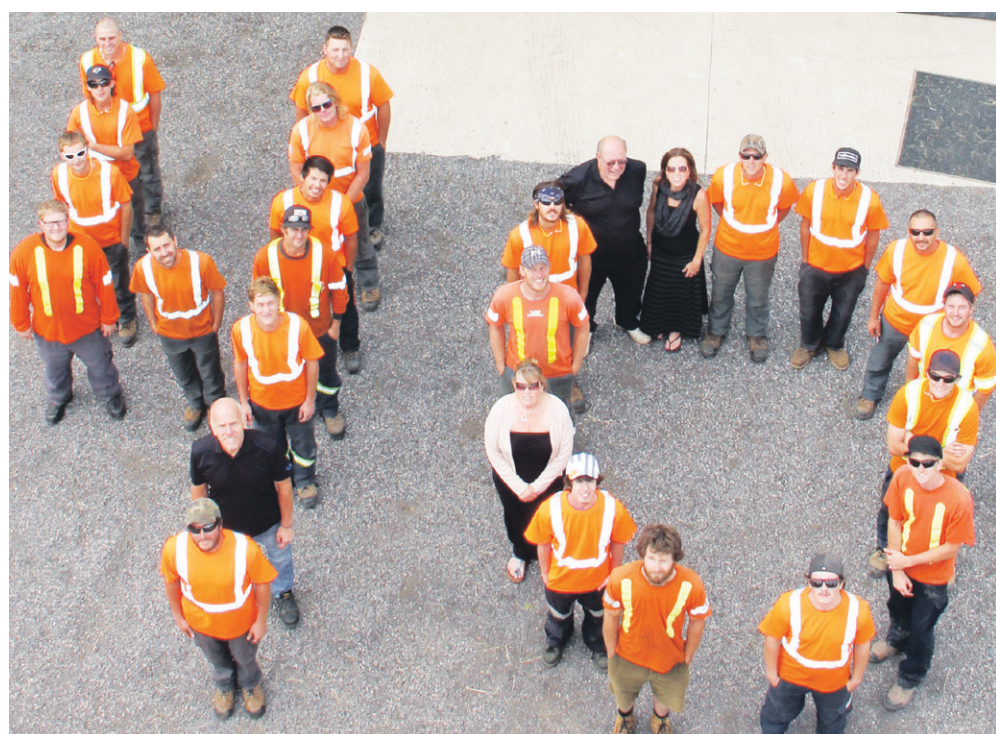
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Colonial employees celebrate 40 years of service in a unique way.

Photo by Phil Gravelle

Colonial Tree Service celebrates 40 years in business here

By PHIL GRAVELLE
Special to the IFP

Highly trained staff and dedication to customer service have enabled strong growth at Colonial Tree Service, which is celebrating 40 years in business this month.

The company recently outgrew its facility on Armstrong Ave. in Georgetown and moved its head office and operations centre to Erin, at 17 Sideroad and Trafalgar Road, north of Brisbane.

They will host an anniversary barbeque with live music there on Sept. 13, at 6 p.m. RSVP to admin@colonialtree.ca. Owner Mike Burns plans to start a hardwood tree nursery on the 9.3-acre site.

Colonial is the longest running full service tree care firm in Ontario. It was founded in 1974 by Brian and Debbie Butler, initially part-time for Brian, who was an arborist and forestry safety instructor. Operating from Limehouse, it became a full-time venture in the 1990s.

Six years ago they sold it to Burns, the son of one of Debbie's cousins, and stayed on for two years to help him with the business. Burns didn't know much about trees when he started, but he did have experience in sales, marketing and business development.

He has more than quadrupled the revenue of the business and increased the staff from five to 28. Colonial now has eight crews in the field, led by Certified Arborists. Crews include apprentices who have graduated from college arboriculture programs.

"Certification is expected by our clients," said Burns, stressing the value of hiring a firm with safety training, insurance, extensive equipment and years of experience. They've been called in to fix some of the work done by

"fly-by-nighters and one-truck wonders" that flourished after last December's ice storm.

Between the storm cleanup and the ongoing crisis with the Emerald Ash Borer, Colonial has been very busy. They serve private homeowners, primarily in Halton Hills, but also have corporate accounts such as the Halton District School Board, and the cities of Mississauga, Oakville and Woodstock. They have several satellite work yards, including operations in Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo.

Tree and shrub health care, including maintenance programs and deep root feeding, are becoming a more important aspect of the business.

"A healthy tree should be able to withstand drought or whatever Mother Nature throws at it," said Burns.

Their services include pruning of trees, shrubs and hedges, cabling and bracing, lot clearing and stump removal. They have Certified Utility Arborists qualified to clear branches from high voltage power lines, and can provide Arborist Reports when required by municipalities.

They'll chop felled trees into firewood, or wood chips, and deliver and plant new trees. They'll even hang holiday lights in your trees, but only until the first week of December.

The cost of treating for Emerald Ash Borer infestation is coming down, said Burns. Protecting a 30-cm ash is now about \$200, a treatment that will likely have to be repeated twice at two-year intervals.

Colonial has a crane service for hoisting, platform and bucket work, including jobs that are unrelated to trees. They are available for 24-hour emergency service, especially when trees fall onto homes and cars.

More information is available at 905-877-8591, or at www.colonialtree.ca.

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