

Climbing to success

Scott Tower Services focuses on tower maintenance, installation

By Kyla Woodard
For Clay Today

MIDDLEBURG — Scoping out an area, checking for safety, gearing up and taking the long climb to the top.

With three points of contact at all times, tower climbers slowly but surely make their way to the highest point to keep cell phone signals and mobile networks in the Clay County area going.

"A lot of people...don't realize that. They just see all the people getting rescued by the police and fire departments. They don't see us in the background making sure that the network is up and running," said Drew Frasure, lead tower technician at Scott Tower Services.

The experience of a tower climber is drastic. And one company is using this experience to keep Northeast Florida running smoothly.

In 2005, husband and wife Ian and Stacey Scott left their jobs to take a leap of faith and dive into a communications tower climber's "heightened" workforce.

Stacey Scott was a branch manager at the AmSouth Bank, now Regions Bank, in Orange Park. Ian Scott was working for another tower company at the time.

"I left the bank, and he left his job. We started with his truck and one other guy," said company president Stacey Scott,



SEE TOWER, 17



Workers at Scott Tower Services think safety first by using three connecting straps to avoid a fatal fall. The company has a Comtrain Certified Climbing Safety and Rescue Instructor on staff. Owners Ian and Stacey Scott said they get adrenaline rushes every time they climb more than 200 feet to install or repair a tower.

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The Scotts took their leap and made it a reality. They are the sole owners of Scott Tower Services. A tower service center located in Middleburg. Together the couple got insured and began their company, which specializes in areas such as tower erection, tower repair and inspections and access road builds.

The service initially began out of the couple's home. However, Stacey Scott said the incoming deliveries of more hardware prompted them to move to a bigger space.

"It got to be too much with the deliveries. Because we were getting steel delivered, by this point, we were building towers," Stacey Scott said.

The company's vice president, Ian Scott, began climbing towers out of high school and already had a great reputation as a climber, so Stacey Scott said starting the business was all word of mouth.

"We didn't really advertise or anything. People just called for him to come and maintain towers. And then it just grew," Stacey Scott said.

With their gear and certifications in hand, Stacey Scott said the crews would travel to their locations and stay in corporate housing spaces.

The company was initially a more significant business. The couple, at one point, grew their company to five states.

However, Stacey Scott said they wanted to give more stability to accommodate the homes and families of their employees. So, now the company operates solely around

Northeast Florida.

Working at a bank, Stacey Scott said her knowledge of helping others create their businesses, as well as her husband's expertise, gave her the experience and the push to start the company.

"I found it fun to help them open their businesses. So, I had a little knowledge of that. So, we talked about it and just took the dive and made Scott Tower Services," Stacey Scott said.

The small atmosphere of the company is something that Stacey cherishes the most about the job.

"We started as a small company, got bigger, and now we're smaller again. I like the more intimate, family setting," Stacey Scott said.

Ian Scott said since he began climbing, he's witnessed the industry's growth.

"When I first started doing it, there were a lot of middle-sized companies, I'd say...300 employees being a middle-sized company. There are no more companies like that," Ian Scott said. "You're [either] 10,000 strong or 12 strong. There's no in-between anymore."

Stacey Scott said this close atmosphere allows for a strong camaraderie between the employees.

And for Frasure, this camaraderie is key to getting the job done.

"If we're not on the same page, bad things could happen. So...as long as you have good guys with good communication, usually every job goes smoothly," Frasure said.

And with the job running as planned, Frasure said his days consist of staying up on the towers for around eight to 12 hours

a day.

The towers that these climbers fix aren't just any towers. They are the towers that encompass human life in every way. These climbers aid in maintaining and repairing cell phone towers, which keep phones and electronics running.

Life without talking or texting on the phone would be inevitable without the jobs of these brave "first responders."

Stacey Scott said that even with the great responsibility the climbers carry to the community, it doesn't come without risks.

"If you're not 100% percent tied off at all times, then you could fall to your death. It's very dangerous," Stacey Scott said.

Frasure said that even with tower climbing being one of the most dangerous jobs in the world, knowing the risks gives him an adrenaline rush when doing his job.

"I've always been an adrenaline junky. The thought about being up there...if you mess up, you could die. And, I don't know, for some reason, that gave me a rush," Frasure said.

In addition to the physical risks, the environment also plays a huge role in climbing safety. In some cases, climbers, in abundance with Florida law, have to leave or abandon a site altogether due to the sighting of a bird's nest.

"Not only is it a law [that] you can't climb the tower if there's an active nest on it. But, they will also talon you," Stacey Scott said.

Still, with the danger that it could encompass, climbers at Scott Towers Services are eager to do their jobs to help the

community.

The company's crew members have donned the "super crew." Stacey Scott said even though the company is small, they get the hardest jobs because they have so much experience.

Stacey Scott recalled when employees were dispatched to help with the aftermath of Hurricane Michael in South Florida. Employees were given clearance and were there for two months straight to fix communication towers after the impact.

"When they shut down the roads for disaster recovery, you've got to have communications services, so you get a pass to go in there," Ian Scott said.

Stacey Scott said this part of their job remains the most important.

"It's a big deal. They need communications to dispatch for help for people," Stacey Scott said. "I think that's probably the most important thing we do: restore communications during a catastrophe."

Along with the climbers being able to give back to the community in a positive way, they also get something in return—am incredible view. Frasure said he can see for miles when he climbs, and he appreciates all that he sees.

"I think the best views from being on a tower would have to be sunrise and sunset," Frasure said.

With the risks, responsibility, and incredible views that come with the tower climbing business, Stacey Scott said she is grateful for all of it.

"I wouldn't change it for anything. I know it's a dangerous job, but all the precautions are taken," Stacey Scott said.