

THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE

STMA Hits a Homerun at Camden Yards



In an editorial shortly after last year's STMA Conference and Exhibition, I fell all over myself praising the event and the organization, and gushed over the promise both held for the future. I'm not a gambler by nature, but I'd have bet the farm that the organization and its conference would be even better in 1993 at Oriole Park at Camden Yards. And more than a few cynics out there would have happily taken that bet.

Hate to gloat . . . but I'd have won.

Despite a cold snap that all but cleared the floor level equipment exhibits, an unfortunate turn that rankled more than a few floor level exhibitors, the 1993 STMA Conference and Exhibition was a resounding success. This year, 230 people attended the event, which nearly doubled the previous year's attendance. Last year, 14 product manufacturers exhibited their wares. This year, there were 63. Compare these numbers with those of the event held in San Diego just three years ago, and the improvement picture becomes even more dramatic. Ten or so exhibitors, less than 100 attendees — STMA and its show looked near-dead.

What brought STMA out of its coma? The answers are leadership and commitment, which come from a number of sources.

First, you have to give outgoing STMA President Gil Landry and the Board of Directors a *tremendous* amount of credit. These people didn't inherit an organization on the rise — they inherited an organization that had almost received last rites. They made tough decisions, which included an association management change (for the better). Smith-Bucklin, the firm that now manages STMA, has helped the organization turn the corner. STMA's leadership also made a decision to be fiscally responsible. Three years ago the organization was \$58,000 in debt. By the end of this year, the organization will have cleared that debt.

Second, you have to give a tremendous amount of credit to the STMA Chapters. The chapters continued to grow during STMA's more troubled times, and they are the foundation for the national organization. Total membership stands at more than 500, and this year's retention rate was a record 77 percent. Some of STMA's strongest chapters, including Colorado and Chesapeake, have become strong forces in the last few years. The Chesapeake Chapter hosted this year's event. Their hard work translated into the most successful STMA Conference and Exhibition to date.

STMA is a volunteer organization. Its future rests on the commitment and enthusiasm of its members. From those I met in Baltimore (energetic individuals like Chris Bunnell, president of the growing Southern California Chapter, and Paul Greenwell of the Carolinas Chapter), I get the feeling that future is bright. New STMA President Greg Petry and the board members will inherit a healthier organization than their predecessors; and in a way, that increases the pressure on them. When you take over the leadership of any entity in distress, people don't expect much overnight. When you succeed quickly, everyone is pleasantly surprised. But when you take over a growing organization you are *expected* to maintain and improve upon that growth. Petry and the board, as well the entire STMA membership, are more-than-up -to the challenge.

I'd bet the farm on it.

Matthew Trulio

EVENTS

CALENDAR

JANUARY

3-5 Wisconsin Turfgrass & Green Industry Expo. Holiday Inn-West, Madison, WI. Contact: Dr. Frank Rossi (608) 262-1490.

4-5 Turfgrass and Ornamental Pest Control Workshop. Turfgrass Technology Center, Columbus, OH. Contact: Jeff Lefton (317) 846-7020.

5-7 Ontario Turfgrass Symposium and Trade Show. University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario. Contact: Kelly Wilson, office of continuing education (519) 824-4120, ext. 3814.

10-13 Eastern Pennsylvania Turf Conference & Trade Show. Valley Forge Convention Center, King of Prussia, PA. Contact: Scott Guiser (215) 345-3283.

18-20 64th annual Michigan Turfgrass Conference. Holiday Inn, South Convention Center, Lansing, MI. Contact: Kay Patrick (517) 321-1660.

31-1 6th Annual Grounds Maintenance Seminar, Las Palmas Hotel, Orlando, FL. Contact: Floyd Perry, 800-227-9381.

JAN 31-FEB 7 International Golf Course Show. Dallas, TX. Contact: GCSAA, (913) 841-2240.

FEBRUARY

3-6 California and Pacific Southwest Recreation and Park Conference. Anaheim, CA. Contact: California Park and Recreation Society (916) 446-2777.

7-8 29th annual Shade Tree Symposium and Trade Show. Lancaster Host Resort and Conference Center, Lancaster, PA. Contact: Elizabeth Wertz (215) 795-2096.

Send announcements on your events
two months in advance to:
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