

STMA MESSAGE

The Ripple Effect



By: Bob Patt, STMA board member

Positive action can move through your organization in a wide-ranging ripple effect to produce results much greater than anticipated. This is what happened to Canton's Thurman Munson Memorial Stadium, which earned the Professional Diamond of the Year honors for 1995-1996, sponsored by STMA, Beam Clay and *sportsTURF*.

As a result, Kevan Lindsey (head groundskeeper), Bill Johnson (Canton's recreation director), John Reese (the recreation department staff member with responsibility for multiple recreation fields) and I (manager of Canton's Civic Center and Munson Stadium) attended STMA's 8th Annual Conference in Colorado Springs earlier this year.

There, we had the opportunity to observe activities and visit with several STMA board members. Once back in Canton, the four of us met to discuss joint actions we could take to benefit both the city and the recreation department. Together we purchased an aerator and a topdresser that both departments share. We cooperate in other areas as well.

Bill and John both gained a greater understanding of the importance of fields and the fact that better maintenance allows greater field use.

As a direct result of the conference, the recreation department's summer playground program now offers "A Day at Munson Stadium." Activities include an opportunity for

the youngsters to meet Kevan and learn how he paints designs, cuts the grass, and maintains the pitcher's mound and skinned areas of the infield. They're impressed with the care involved and take a certain "ownership" in the recreation department fields as a result.

Our award-winning field also is appreciated by Joe Scrivner, the general manager of our Frontier League professional team, the Canton Crocodiles. Joe notes he doesn't need to monitor the field to ensure decent playing conditions for his team. Kevan is on-site each day, and his knowledge and dedication produce a field that provides excellent playing conditions.

Players, coaches and owners of other teams in the league have set our field as their standard of excellence. Several have sought my advice on field construction and Kevan's advice on field maintenance. The league's commissioner has sent prospective franchises to observe the field so they know what can be done and why it matters.

In Minor League baseball, the game is part of the overall experience, and family attendance is increased by special events. So, the field is a marketing tool for the Canton Crocodiles.

Joe and Bill have established a program that connects Little League athletes with the professional players at each home game. As a pro is called to take the field, he is accompanied to his position by one of the Little League players. Because the field is in such great condition and the Crocodiles obviously take pride in it, the young players, coaches and parents are thrilled with the experience and better understand the role of the field in the game.

Obviously, our ripple of multiple-staff conference attendance produced a wave of positive results. We're planning now for the 1998 conference. □

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