

Different ways to skin a cat

by Floyd Perry

At the recent 2001 STMA conference in Tampa, much of the parlor and hallway conversation revolved around communication between groundskeeper and coach, groundskeeper and supervisor and in general, the specific duties surrounding our responsibilities on the job.

Whether we as professional groundskeepers possess a CPR card for safety and liability or advance our job skills through a pest control class for extra CEUs, much of the general population identifies our profession primarily as mowers of turf. That needs to change!

One method I believe progressive groundskeepers can use to demonstrate their individual skills on their property is to create visual interest. As GMS visits various parks, recreation centers or school campuses, I'm very impressed with the types of suggestive and helpful signage used. I honestly believe to change the typical "Guy on the street" attitude toward facility maintenance personnel, our profession needs to create positive images of our facilities that can change and elevate our professional image.

One groundskeeper in Grain Valley High School in Missouri enlisted the help of four interested fathers and created a football playing surface for their 2000 homecoming comparable to an NFL playoff field prepared for television viewing. Their high school has 520 students but one would never know that from seeing their facilities.

The men and women in our groundskeeping industry are some of the most creative, innovative and industrious folks on the payroll and all they need is some quality support and encouragement. At times, an "atta boy," "thank you" or "nice job" goes a long way.

Communication is a two-way street. Take your before-and-after photos, create your reference documentation and more importantly,



create awareness of your work ethic by presenting a quality image on your property so your efforts will be recognized even when you are of the clock.

I'm currently writing my fourth pictorial guide, "Turf Grows by the Inch and Is Killed by the Foot." If you would like to submit soccer or football photos, please send them to me. It will be your opportunity to show off your skills.

Floyd Perry is author of three books: *The Pictorial Guides to Quality Groundskeeping: I—Covering the Bases; II—There Ain't No Rules; and III—Maintain it Easy, Keep It Safe.* He has also produced three videos: *The ABC's of Grounds Maintenance: Vol. 1, Softball; Vol. 2, Baseball; and Vol. 3, Soccer/Football Field Refurbishment.* For more information about Perry's tips, call (800) 227-9381, or e-mail grounds@digital.net.