

Final thoughts on STMA's silver anniversary

By David Minner, Ph.D

Throughout 2006 Dr. Dave Minner, a turfgrass professor at Iowa State University, has shared in his "Q&A" column lessons he's learned as a member of the Sports Turf Managers Association. Most of those lessons were directly related to maintaining turf. But these final three lessons are more "off the field" and just as valuable:

Lesson #23: Volunteers, whether players, parents, boosters, or other supporters of the athletic program can provide substantial support for the field. Let them choose between fundraising and maintenance on the field. Fundraising efforts are usually more effective when they are working towards a tangible item, like an irrigation system, core aerator, or mower. Actual work on the field requires careful organization and supervision but once mastered it can result in substantial pride in those involved and in community development.

Lesson #24: Balance your time between field and family to make you the best person you can be. Don't lose yourself and your family in this job. We tend to follow the golf course profession in many ways because of job similarities and the long hours invested during the sporting season. I have often heard the NFL referred to as "no family life" for the managers and crew that take care of these facilities.

One golf course survey indicated that nearly 50% of the superintendents feel that they have little free time. Many of you put the fields and your profession very high on your list of priorities. Just take a moment to consider if you are properly balancing field and family to make you the best person you can be. Don't forget the "players and fans" at home.

Lesson #25: Invest in the human resource. Provide educational opportunities by joining the national Sports Turf Managers Association (800-323-3875). Budget for personnel to attend educational meetings and "hands on workshops" held by your local STMA chapters. Develop a library of books, videos, and training manuals. Keep trade magazines in the break room for employees.

Are you looking for motivated employees? Watch who does the reading, asks the questions, and takes the special interest in the field. We all caught the bug for this profession somewhere along the line. Take notice of your employees and be ready to be a mentor to those that are ready and eager to listen.

Budgets are simply numbers on a piece of paper that restrict how much money we can spend in a given period of time. Don't be overwhelmed by numbers on paper and don't restrict your greatest resource, the human resource. Surround yourself with dependable, competent people whom often exceed your capabilities, and then learn to manage them. Empower others with your vision and watch as the human resource grows with the budget you have.

Dr. Minner is a Board member of the Sports Turf Managers Association and a professor at Iowa State University. ■



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