

Upcoming STMA Conference to Feature New Programs and Adjusted Schedule

As we rapidly approach the STMA Conference and Exhibition in Phoenix, the STMA Conference Committee has finalized some expansion and changes to the events, scheduled for January 15-19, 2008. The Committee and the STMA Board stepped up to the challenge to provide you with more education, more value, and more fun!

First of all, the SAFE/Jacobsen Golf Tournament will be moved to Tuesday, Jan. 15, opening up Wednesday, Jan. 16 for a new set of



Institutes and Pre-Conference Workshops. Both new sessions are scheduled during the day, before the Networking Sessions that afternoon and the Welcome Reception that evening, which signals the official beginning of the conference. The Pre-Conference Workshops will be included with an individual's conference registration, but the Institutes

will charge a nominal fee for attendance.

On Thursday, the General Session has been moved back into its original time slot in the morning, after a 1-year experiment having it right after lunch. Another highlight of the conference every year, the General Session this year will feature "Extraordinaist" Craig Karges, who will dazzle you with his abilities and challenge what you think is possible. Or impossible!

Friday morning will feature the new Innovative Sessions, scheduled early before the Friday General Session, and bring to light some truly unique ideas and methods. The Friday General Session, which is another new addition to the conference lineup, honors Dr. Henry Indyk and Dr. Kent Kurtz, and will be the first plenary presentations in the history of the STMA Conference.

And last, but most certainly not least, the MLB/NFL/MLS Seminar will be Saturday, Jan. 19. The Seminar is an offsite seminar that

features the best practices of those Sports Turf Managers who have made it to the highest level of the profession.

Not to forget that the STMA Exhibition provides more than 9 hours of dedicated time on Thursday and Friday to view the newest equipment and products in the industry and includes a new Mound Building demonstration on the floor!

With the SAFE/Jacobsen Golf Tournament at a location to be determined, the SAFE Live and Silent Auctions, and the STMA Awards Banquet, you can see it is to be a week packed with many educational opportunities, quality networking, vendor contact, and countless memories for all who attend. Log on to www.stma.org or call 800.323.3875 for more information.

Reservations are now being accepted at the Hyatt in Phoenix. Call (888)421-1442 or go to www.hyatt.com to make your reservation today. We look forward to seeing you in Phoenix! ■

SAFE Scholarship Program Funds the Future

The Foundation for Safer Athletic Field Environments (SAFE) Scholarship Program passes a milestone this year as it enters its 15th school year of awards.

A new round of scholarships will be presented at the upcoming STMA Conference and Exhibition in Phoenix next year. But before any new scholarships can be awarded, let's look back at some of the previous winners and what they have done since receiving the award from SAFE.

Abby McNeal, CSFM, now the turfgrass manager at Toyota Park/AEG in Bridgeview, IL



Abby McNeal, CSFM

and home of Major League Soccer's Chicago Fire, won one of the first SAFE scholarships awarded in 1993-1994. Since then, she has constantly served STMA by sitting on several committees, writing numerous articles,

and presenting at conference; in addition to serving diligently on the STMA Board of Directors for five years. In 2007, McNeal assumed the board position of president-elect and is poised to become STMA's first female president in 2009.

Other SAFE Scholarship winners have gone on to achievements of their own. There are no fewer than seven scholarship winners who have continued their education through the Ph.D. level or will receive their doctorate this year. Many have gone on to receive the prestigious CSFM designation. Several, including McNeal, now supervise their own facility or are top assistants at professional facilities or major universities.

Winners have been students at 30 different institutions and Michigan State University has had the most scholarships awarded with 17, followed closely by Penn State, which has had 14 winners. Twelve of the ninety winners are female, a 13% clip, which outpaces the STMA Membership, which is about 4% female. More

than two-thirds of the winners are still STMA members in one form or another, meaning that those winners stay involved and participate actively. Currently, winners serve on about seven committees or subcommittees, with two chairing the committee on which they serve.

As you can see, SAFE Scholarship winners are great ambassadors for Sports Turf Managers, STMA, SAFE and the industry as a whole. They work diligently to promote the profession and represent STMA with the utmost pride and amazing fortitude.

Each year, SAFE awards a minimum of \$12,500 in scholarship to winners, and also provides them with a free conference registration and travel to the conference. Scholarship winners are selected in two-year, four-year, and graduate categories by a panel of qualified judges, and are awarded scholarships of a minimum of \$1,000. Judging is done independently and applicants are rated based on academic achievement and work experience, recommendations of professors and employers, career

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The Sports Turf Manager as a Crisis Communicator

Perhaps you will never be faced with responding to a crisis. But, if you ever have an athlete get injured during play, an employee who gets hurt on the job, a disgruntled employee, a weather related disaster, or an environmental incident, you just might find yourself in the spotlight and under scrutiny.

As a manager of people, you may have to deal with an employee's death or illness, a sudden change in top management, or employee issues of sexual harassment. Each one of these can constitute a crisis. You must be prepared for that decisive moment when your response can lead the crisis to better or to worse. An initial negative perception is nearly impossible to reverse.

Crisis Communication Response Tips

- Respond within 24 hours.
- Don't point fingers.
- Always be available to the media.
- Be visible and on-site.
- Tell the absolute truth.
- Never say, "No comment."

You are judged within the first 30 seconds of speaking if you and the information you are providing is trusted. Appearing empathetic and car-

ing are the most importance characteristics you can exhibit to show "trustworthiness". Your audience will also assess your competence, your honesty and your commitment. Your goal as a communicator is to demonstrate these attributes.

It is important to recognize that the media is usually more interested in covering opposing viewpoints and that bad news and conflict are more newsworthy. Most reporters are working under a tight deadline, have limited scientific and technical knowledge and can be a bit cynical. When preparing to talk with the media, address the principal underlying concern of the audience/questioner/listener keeping your responses short and concise.

In many crisis situations it is important to bring in a third party and to tell the media whom you have contacted.

Crisis Communication Interviews

- Take control early by educating the reporter and correcting misunderstandings.
- Clarify the questions.
- Prepare two to three main messages.
- Give facts: who, what, when, where, but don't give how and why.
- Express your concern. Safety is always the top priority.
- Avoid jargon and do not use humor.
- Frame your answers in the positive.
- Tell how fast you responded, how much has been done and what you will do about it in the future.
- Thank or give appreciation to any assistance.
- Avoid words with negative connotations such as lethal, risky, deaths, maimed, toxic.
- Do not repeat the "charges" or any negatives words, such as no, not, never.
- Be conscious of your body language. Do not place your hands in a "fig leaf" in front or in back of you, but keep your hands/palms open and above the waist. Avoid touching your face, clasping or clenching your hands and pointing your fingers.

Remember these phrases.

You want to give a sense of more to come, which will help to establish your trustworthiness.

"What I can tell you is ..."

"So far, what we know is ..."

"So far, what we have done is ..."

"What we are planning to do next is ..."

"We will be able to tell you more when ..."
"I'll be glad to talk with you again after we conduct ..."

Source: Susan Santos, Ph.D., FOCUS GROUP, Medford, MA

CRISIS EXAMPLE AND RESPONSE

Situation: You have a major event that is being hosted in your stadium the next day. A set of temporary bleachers collapses and your assistant is critically injured. A reporter is at the stadium asking what happened and why, and if the event is taking place.

Your first response must show concern for the worker and his family. Your response to whether or not the event will be held the next day depends upon your management team's decision. If you are going ahead with it, you need to respond with how you are insuring fan safety. For example, "We are going ahead with the concert tomorrow; however to insure the safety of our rock fans, we will be limiting the seating to the built-in seats in the stadium grandstands and offering on-the-floor seating in the endzone."

If you are not going ahead: "We will not be holding the concert tomorrow. Fan safety is paramount and until we know why the bleachers collapsed, we will not be holding any events." ■



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aspirations within the sports turf industry, and a short essay. SAFE Scholarships are merit based and are not awarded based on need. Eligible applicants must be full time students and have at least one semester of school remaining.

The SAFE Scholarship Program is generously funded by a grant from The TORO Foundation, and the SAFE/Jacobsen Golf Tournament and SAFE Live and Silent Auctions held each year at conference, in addition to ground level donations received from the membership throughout the year.

STMA strongly encourages all of its student members to take advantage of this amazing benefit that is available ONLY to current students. All SAFE Scholarship application materials are due no later than October 1, 2007 to STMA headquarters. For more information on the SAFE Scholarship Program and to download an application, please go to www.stma.org or call STMA headquarters at (800) 323-3875. ■

STMA Field of the Year Program: Take Pride in Your Profession

Now is the perfect time to prepare your STMA Field of the Year Application. The deadline for materials to be received at STMA headquarters is October 15, 2007. STMA's prestigious Field of the Year program is in its 16th year and is getting stronger every year. With record numbers of applicants the past two years, competition is stiff! But with hard work and diligence, each and every STMA member has a field that could become Field of the Year. STMA presents awards in baseball, softball, football, and soccer categories at High School/Parks and Rec, College and University, and Professional levels.

Each Field of the Year Award winner is presented with a special plaque at the STMA Awards Banquet, held each year at the STMA Conference and Exhibition. This year, the Awards Banquet will be the evening of Friday,

Jan. 18, in Phoenix. In addition to the plaque, each STMA Field of the Year winner will receive free conference registration, up to \$500 towards lodging at the conference, STMA signature apparel, and a feature article in the official publication of STMA, *SportsTurf* magazine. These awards are generously supported by STMA's official awards sponsors Carolina Green Corp., CoverMaster, Hunter Industries, Scotts TurfSeed, Turface, and World Class Athletic Surfaces.

Take pride in your profession and submit your application for STMA Field of the Year and get recognition for your field and respect from your peers. For more information or to download an application, please log on to www.STMA.org or call (800) 323-3875. Remember the deadline for materials to be received is October 15, 2007. ■



Penn State's award-winning Jeffrey Field, with Beaver Stadium and famed Mount Nittany in the background

A Answer: from page 14



John Mascaro's Photo Quiz

The irregular brown arrow shaped area on field was caused by running over a firework with a mower. The firework was not a little one that you buy at the store, but one of the big booms that are in the sky after a typical minor league game. According to the sports turf manager, the fireworks guy scouts the area for any extra, unexploded shells but apparently he missed one. The mower operator was mowing the multi-use park field behind the stadium when he hit a 3-inch shell (or "salute" as the fireworks guy called it) and it exploded, leaving this nice arrow shaped pattern in the grass.

The sports turf manager thinks the

"stem" of the arrow shape comes from the discharge chute on the zero turn rotary mower with a 60-inch deck. The mower was not damaged but the operator received a concussion and was put on the disabled list for 15 days. All things considered, it could have been worse. The mower operators also usually do a thorough check before they start mowing this particular area. I bet these guys on this crew do not need coffee in the morning to keep on their toes. ■

Photo submitted by TJ Brewer, Head Groundskeeper for the Burlington Bees in Burlington, IA, the Class A minor league affiliate of the Kansas City Royals.

If you would like to submit a photograph for John Mascaro's Photo Quiz please send it to Turf-Tec International, John Mascaro, 1471 Capital Circle NW, Suite # 13, Tallahassee, FL 32303 or email to john@turf-tec.com. If your photograph is selected, you will receive full credit. All photos submitted become property of *SportsTurf* Magazine.

