

Certification: examining members' reservations

Since its inception in 2000, STMA's certification program has continued to grow in prominence and recognition by the membership and the profession. Currently 88 members are certified. As STMA continues to encourage members to "take the test," we also have become aware of certain stumbling blocks that may hold back some members. Those hindrances, gathered from the certification survey conducted in the fall of 2007, can be grouped into six categories:

- Value to me in my career is uncertain (40%)
- Employer does not request it (32%)
- Study/exam prep time is limited (31%)
- Not knowledgeable about the program & process (24%)
- Too costly (15%)
- Potential to fail the exam (14%)

This month we'll tackle the top two reasons noted above and provide some insights from certified members on how becoming a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) provides value to them.

Boyd Montgomery, CSFM

"Certification raises the level of expertise and lends credibility to turf managers. This helps with conversations with your boards, management, and the public on many aspects of turf management. If we want our profession to become a high-paying, respectable profession, then we need to commit ourselves to becoming the professionals that command this level of respect. If you think about other occupations, many have levels of certification, which to you as a consumer brings a small piece of mind. For whatever reason you are engaging them, you have confidence that the person has obtained a level of expertise."

Jimmy Rodgers, CSFM

"When I was challenged with becoming certified, I was the sports field manager at the University of Virginia. The educational setting at a university, (even in an athletic department), and my willingness to stretch my proficiencies, was a natural marriage. The University supported me 100%, both in time and in funding to fulfill this desire. I was rewarded with a 10% base pay increase shortly after the passing results came back from STMA.

"Certification, in my opinion, does not necessarily make you a more knowledgeable field manager than those who have not taken the test. However, it does signify to yourself and to your peers that you are not afraid of a challenge, and that you have taken steps toward a greater appreciation of the needed proficiencies critical to effectively managing sports turf."

Dale Getz, CSFM

"By studying for the exam I was able to fill gaps in my knowledge base. This knowledge base provided me with confidence to decisively move forward in my career. As a professional, being certified showed my employer that I was committed to my job and had the background to deal with every situation with confidence."

Richard Calarco, CSFM

"I truly believe in the sports field certification program. Over my 30+ years of experience, I have too often seen many facilities with totally unacceptable conditions due to poor management and lack of trained personnel. It is to this end that I feel the certified program truly begins to provide professional accountability to the turf management industry."

Don Savard, CSFM

"I have always believed that the public deserves the best and most qualified professionals to take care of them, whether the professional is doctor, lawyer, mechanic, or green industry professional. I realized that if I wanted to make a difference and be the very best that I could be, it was time to do something about my own lack of professional credentials.

"Since attaining my CSFM, I have confidence in my abilities but more importantly, I have a greater self knowledge of what I do not know. I have had the opportunity to help other people in my profession one-on-one, through articles I have written and presentations that I have made both locally and nationally. I am at the top of my game, and I am still growing. I know that the credential, hard work, professionalism, knowledge and skills that I gained to reach the level of CSFM will open doors for the next and *better* opportunity."

Eric Fasbender, CSFM

"When I first became a member of the STMA in 2001, I knew that getting my certification was going to be an important step in my career. I had a vague idea that getting certified might lead me to get that dream job or help justify making more money, but the real reason I wanted my CSFM became clear when I attended my first STMA conference. I saw the other members who were certified and realized it was about being recognized as a professional in this industry." ■

For more information on the CSFM program, contact Leah Craig at lcraig@STMA.org or 800-323-3875.

Governance changes on the horizon

As President Andresen, CSFM, reported during the Annual Meeting in January, several governance changes will be brought to the membership for a vote early this fall. There are