

How get your employer to support Certification

Twenty-five percent of STMA members who are eligible to take the Certification Exam plan to take the exam within a year, and an additional 35% who are eligible to test plan to take the exam sometime in the future. The support of an employer can be a significant asset before, during, and after certification. But, how do you approach your employer for that support? Simply asking for financial assistance may work for some, or earmarking it as a budget line item may work for others. However, for most members it will require you to educate your employer about the value that your certification brings to the athletic facility.

What is the value of certification to your employer? It can be summed up in one word: results. Going through the process to become certified and to maintain that certification will improve your skills and leadership capabilities. The enhancement of your skills will help you better use resources, manage operations, apply critical thinking to problems, and provide solutions—all attributes that produce results and are highly desired by employers.

Most likely, your employer is not familiar with the STMA Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) program. A good way to begin is to explain the program, starting with when you are eligible to take the test. Cover the detailed scope and length of the test. By design, the certification process is no easy task. Provide to your employer the costs to apply to the program and the testing and renewal fees. Make certain you include how your continuing education and service to the industry provide direct benefits to the facility. By enhancing your skills and knowledge to meet the demands of your ever-advancing profession, you are providing more value to your employer.

Translate these improvements into ROI (return on investment) language for your employer. Focus on the safety aspect of the playing surfaces for the athletes and the quality of the aesthetics for fan appeal and enjoyment. Employers who are concerned about safe, quality conditions for their players should easily make the connection that a CSFM has the extensive knowledge and

experience needed to ensure a superior field. Correlate your continuing education to future field projects and talk in terms of saving time and money through better management strategies.

Becoming certified helps you to raise your credibility and perceived authority with your employer and within the industry. Greater credibility also creates greater expectations for high performance. Maintaining your CSFM credential is a solid way to deliver that performance.

A rewarding experience

One hundred million Americans volunteer their time to worthy causes every year. That's a staggering number; one out of every two people over the age of 13. Volunteering for many is a way of returning some benefit received. In STMA, many who volunteer their time to a committee see that service as a way to "give back" to the association.

David Schlotthauer, a member of the Bylaws and Information

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Outreach committees, wants to return something to the association for the value he receives by being a member. "Foremost is the opportunity to attend the annual conventions, as well as publishing informative articles in *SportsTurf* magazine and the opportunity to network with fellow STMA members," says Schlotthauer. "None of which I would have been able to do if I was not an STMA member. I feel a responsibility to give something back to STMA for what STMA has done for me."

Dan Douglas, who is on the Chapter Relations Committee, echoes Schlotthauer and adds, "Also, working closely with other volunteers that I may not otherwise meet, I am able to expand my network of peers."

Darian Daily, Information Outreach Chair, believes his committee service is like the old saying, "You get out of it what you put into it." Daily says, "I find the more involved I get in working with committees the more I get back personally with knowledge and friendships."

Kevin Meredith, a member of the Information Outreach, Chapter Relations and the Editorial Committees, jumped into national committee service for the first time in 2007. He was not sure he had the time to volunteer. "Not only did it take far less time than I had imagined, the experience was empowering. It was worth the time invested and more rewarding than I ever imagined it would be," says Meredith.

Volunteer service can be an ineffable experience that makes the volunteer "feel good." For others, it provides a sense of ownership and responsibility. Meredith believes sports turf managers should be involved in committee service to help guide the association. "First and foremost, this is our association in the truest sense, which means that the decision makers are us. It is not some other group that determines the direction we will take, it is Sports Turf Managers volunteering and leading us," says Meredith.

STMA has more than 200 members volunteering for committee service, who serve one-year terms from March through January. President Mike Andresen, CSFM will be appointing members to the committees listed below by early March for 2008. Almost all of the committees meet via conference calls several times a year. Please consider volunteering for a committee. Mark your interest on the Committee Volunteer form and return it by February 1 to STMA Headquarters.

STMA Committees

Awards: To judge the association's awards program applicants selecting the Field of the Year winners and the Minor League Baseball Sports Turf Manager of the Year; to develop strategies to enhance the programs.

Bylaws: To develop association bylaws, which are fair and enforceable, and clearly define the expectations for membership, governance processes and board of directors' service.

Certification: To develop strategies to grow the number of certified members; to consistently monitor the program and recommend enhancements to ensure that the program is the top achievement for sports turf managers.

Chapter Relations: To create a chapter structure that is beneficial locally and nationally; to financially assist chapters with their admin-

istrative, operations and educational efforts; to facilitate the sharing of best practices,

Conference: (Conference Education, Exhibition, and Tours subcommittees) To develop all content, sessions, workshops and off-site venues, and select speakers and moderators for the next year's conference that will make it a "must attend" event for members and non-members; to recommend strategies that will drive attendance to the exhibition and will add value to exhibitors.

Editorial: To insure that the STMA magazine contains information relevant to the sports turf manager; to provide ideas and contacts for articles for publication;

Ethics: To provide a fair and unbiased council to investigate claims of ethics violations, determine if the claim has merit, and shepherd the appeals process.

Finance & Audit: To provide oversight of the STMA's financial resources by reporting information to the Board of Directors.

Historical: To preserve the history of the association and the profession

Information Outreach: To develop educational and informational opportunities for members to enhance their personal and professional development.

Membership: To develop initiatives to drive membership growth and retention; to recommend programs that add value for each member.

Nominating: To provide to the membership a qualified slate of officers and directors for the annual STMA Board of Directors election in accordance with the STMA Bylaws.

Scholarship: To judge the SAFE Scholarship recipients; to develop strategies to enhance the program.

Technical Standards: To help determine standards and best management practices needed in the profession and to guide the work of the ASTM on developing sports field and facility standards.

Website: To insure that the STMA website contains information relevant to members, prospects and the green industry in an easily accessible and consumable format.

Student Challenge winners making excellent use of awards

In 2007, the STMA Student Collegiate Challenge winners received some significant prizes through a new partnership with the SAFE Foundation. Each winning 2-year and 4-year team won a prize of \$4,000 to use in developing a hands-on learning lab or to provide other benefits to the students in the program. The winners, the University of Tennessee and Mt. San Antonio College, provided us with an update of what they are doing with their funds.

STMA Committee Volunteer Form

Committee appointments are to one-year terms of service, March - January. Please fill out a new form annually.

Name _____ Chapter _____

E-Mail _____ Telephone _____

Facility/Industry Representation (check one) ☐ Facilities used by Professional Athletes

☐ Higher Education ☐ Schools K-12 ☐ Parks & Recreation ☐ Academic ☐ Commercial ☐ Student

Committee Interest: (Check all that apply)

☐ Awards ☐ Bylaws ☐ Certification ☐ Chapter Relations ☐ Conference Education ☐ Conference Exhibition
☐ Conference Tours ☐ Editorial ☐ Ethics ☐ Finance & Audit ☐ Historical ☐ Information Outreach
☐ Membership ☐ Nominating ☐ Scholarship ☐ Technical Standards ☐ Website

Return this form to STMA Headquarters, 805 New Hampshire, Ste. E, Lawrence, KS 66044, Fax: 785-843-2977 or via email STMAinfo@STMA.org
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STMA in Action

Mt. San Antonio College

Thanks to the generosity of the STMA, the Mt. Sac Turfgrass Management program was able to purchase two fantastic pieces of equipment, a Husqvarna DT 22-H Power Rake (dethatcher) and a Husqvarna AR-19H aerator.

Until the acquisition of our new equipment, we were only able to view demonstrations of aerating and verticutting. These pieces of equipment have now been incorporated into our program. The students have been able to operate this equipment and experience first hand what it is like to renovate turf areas during our laboratory sessions.

One of those hands-on class laboratories took place in early October 2007. Our class ventured to Hesperia Lake Youth Soccer Complex, which has approximately seven acres of tall fescue turf. Several hundred youths between the ages of five and eighteen play soccer at this facility from March through October.

The soil was becoming compacted in the goalmouths and in the middle of each field, causing the fescue to clump. Thatch had built up



Winning 2-year Student Challenge team from Mt. San Antonio College with professor Brian Scott.

to the point where water and nutrients were having a difficult time getting into the rootzone. In addition, there were several uneven areas due to gopher damage and past attempts to repair low spots.

Mt. Sac turf students formed teams of four to five per team. Each team worked on a single field. A total of four fields were renovated. The renovations included aerating, verticutting, and repairing pre-identified hazards (raising low spots and lowering high spots). In addition, the goalmouth areas were mowed.

For several students, this was the first time they had performed any type of renovation to an athletic facility. For others, it was the first time they had worked with this type of equipment.

After the soccer field renovation, each student wrote a laboratory report that summarized his or her experience. The main theme was clear. The students were amazed that we had such nice equipment that they were able to operate. They learned about creating a safe environment for youth soccer. One of the most valuable experiences, however, was summarized by a student who wrote, "I not only learned about soccer field renovation, but I really got to know sev-

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STMA in Action



Winning 4-year Student Challenge team from University of Tennessee with professor John Sorochari and UT grad student Adam Thoms, the team's coach.

eral other students in the class. I got to know where they lived, where they worked, and what their family was like. It was great getting to know each other while working together."

As all of you know, sports turf management is much more than taking care of the playing surfaces that give us so much pride. Sports turf management is about building relationships with others who share in our vision. We rely on these relationships to give us a boost when things are not going well, to give us someone to celebrate our victories with, and to remind us where we started and what we can achieve together.

Thank you, once again, STMA. You are opening doors for students to discover a world they may have never known existed. The fire is being ignited in so many future sports turf managers



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because of your vision to invest in students. As an educator, I get the ultimate privilege of seeing that excitement grow and blossom into successful careers. I am grateful to this organization for all it does for students. You are making a difference in lives across the country.

—Professor Brian Scott

University of Tennessee

At STMA's 18th Annual Conference last January, a team from the University of Tennessee and coached by Adam Thoms, UT graduate student, won the STMA Student Challenge 4-year competition for the first time in school history. The university received a \$4,000 award to be used to further students hands on experience with sports turf management. The money was sent to the university to support the promotion and education of the sports turf industry. In turn, the UT turf students and Dr. John Sorochoan have been trying to establish a living lab focusing on sports turf. This facility will help to train the next generation of field manager's from all over the globe in eastern Tennessee. The goal is to allow people to visit the facility and learn and share skills related to athletic field management.

It will include a full-sized baseball diamond that will allow students to learn the fine points of skinned areas as well as how to manage the outfield turf. The field will be complete with an outfield wall and warn-

ing track. Several baseball pitching mounds will be on site to teach students how to construct and repair a pitching mound. Multiple pitching mounds enable the students to compete against one another as they apply their newly learned skills.

The center will also have a dual purpose football and soccer field to allow students to learn how to maintain and properly paint a field. The students will also learn how to paint multiple lines for different sports on the same field. The facility will have multiple goal posts to train students on how to raise, lower and level goal posts. There are also three lawn tennis courts drawn into the design to allow for research and practice with maintaining lawn tennis courts.

The goal of the facility is to better prepare the students for careers in sports turf management by promoting real life experiences while in school. The prize money has allowed great flexibility in the quest for equipment for the facility. So far equipment has been sought out for purchase, and the program has been fortunate to have some equipment donated, stretching the money even farther. ■



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