

Student Challenge winners donate money, time

Little Leaguers played ball on new and improved fields last spring thanks to the efforts of Penn State turfgrass science students who won \$4,000 in the 2009 national SportsTurf Managers Association Student Challenge competition. PSU teams also won the 2010 2-year and 4-year competitions. The 2009 team was coached by Matt Naedel, research associate in the Penn State Turfgrass Project.

Penn State turf professor Dr. Andy McNitt said, "The students rated this event as an excellent learning opportunity. We plan to reach out to a different local little league organization this fall. We will do field assessments and develop a renovation plan, acquire and deliver the materials and equipment needed and then implement the plan. It really is an excellent chance for the students to use what they learn and help the community at the same time."

The students donated their winnings and worked alongside Matt Neri, groundskeeper for the State College Spikes, the Pittsburgh Pirates' Single-A affiliate, to overhaul two fields near Centre Hall, PA last fall. The crews spread a new infield mix and installed clay bricks below the pitcher's landing area and batter's and catcher's boxes. They set new pitching rubbers and bases, reshaped the infield and fertilized the outfield.



Penn State turfgrass science students put their education to work for a good cause.

The students also repainted foul lines using donated equipment from Doug Schattinger of Pioneer Athletics. Mark Dargay from E.H. Griffith of Pittsburgh and Valley Ag and Turf of Centre Hall provided equipment for the day. Other items were supplied by Steve Legros of Turf and Dirt. ■

Ask a CSFM ▶ Rick Perruzzi, CSFM, City of South Portland, ME

Benefits of certification verified

Editor's note: This is the third of six installments on how becoming a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) can benefit turf managers professionally as well as improve their facilities.

HOW DID YOU PREPARE FOR THE CSFM EXAM?

Perruzzi: I prepared for the exam by first looking over the comprehensive outline to try to determine what my strengths and weaknesses were so as to focus my attention on those weak areas. After determining my weaknesses I used three main resources to study with: the University of Georgia's Certified Turfgrass Professional course study guide to refresh up on agronomics and pest management; Sports Fields: A Manual for Design, Construction and Maintenance by Jim Puhalla, Jeff Krans and Mike Goatley; and Floyd Perry's book Turf Grows by the Inch and is Killed by the Foot. I felt that those three resources were the best that I had at my disposal so as to not overwhelm myself with too much information.

HOW DID YOU APPROACH YOUR EMPLOYER TO SUPPORT YOUR CERTIFICATION, BOTH FINANCIALLY AND IN THE TIME NEEDED TO PREPARE FOR THE EXAM?

Perruzzi: I approach my employer proactively for all things I do in my job, so in my mind this was no different than any other request I had submitted before. They were very supportive in allowing me to obtain this certification and allowed me to focus my energy on studying for the exam. Financially they viewed it as an investment into the department's future and credibility.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO PURSUE CERTIFICATION?

Perruzzi: It can be difficult to be viewed as a professional at the park and recreation level when on paper I am a laborer. I felt that I needed to try to change that stereotype not just with management but within the community. Also I felt that being certified would allow me to have more influence in the decision-making process with management.

HOW HAS CERTIFICATION HELPED YOUR CAREER?

Perruzzi: Obtaining CSFM status has probably been the best thing to happen to me professionally. It has opened up more opportunities for me to be more creative in my job as a sports turf manager. My employer now knows that when I ask for resources or to try a new product that I have done the research. The increase in credibility has made that process easier, but with credibility comes the accountability, which is part of being a professional in any line of work. ■

