

2010 STMA Conference well-attended despite economy

The Sports Turf Managers Association's (STMA) 21st Annual Conference and Exhibition was held January 12-16, 2010 and was an outstanding event according to both attendees and exhibitors. Nearly 900 Sports Turf Managers from all over the world came to Disney's Coronado Springs Resort and Convention Center in Lake Buena Vista, FL for the green industry's largest sports turf specific event. Including exhibit personnel, more than 1,400 people were on site.

While individual attendance figures paralleled the 2009 event in San Jose, CA the Orlando conference was heralded as the best yet by many in attendance. Exhibitors described foot traffic in the Exhibit Hall as and were pleased to see a full hall of more than 150 exhibiting companies. The event would not be possible without the participation of these companies.

Those attending the conference were able to take advantage more than 90 hours of sports turf specific education, including the addition of an entire day to the schedule with the new Pre-Conference Workshops on Wednesday. Highly regarded industry professionals and academics gave presentations, and peer networking events such as the Industry Segment Networking Sessions, Welcome Reception and Awards Banquet Reception took place throughout the four day event.

The keynote address was given by *Sports Illustrated's* Joe Posnanski and was very well received by the members. Posnanski, known for his ability to impart emotion in his stories and exceptional wit, regaled the crowd with stories of Cleveland's Municipal Stadium, baseball legends Buck O'Neill and Satchel Paige, and drew upon attendees' memories of their first experience with a lush, green athletic field.

The Annual STMA Conference and Exhibition is supported through the generous sponsorship of the following companies: Barenbrug USA; Covermaster, Inc.; Cygnet Turf Equipment; Diamond Pro/TXI; Ewing Irrigation; Hunter Industries; Jacobsen, a Textron Co.; Landscapes Unlimited; Pro's Choice/Oil-Dri. Corp.; Rainbird Corp.; The Toro Company; and World Class Athletic Surfaces, Inc.

The 2011 STMA Conference and Exhibition, which will be the association's 22nd annual event, will be January 11-15, 2011 in Austin, TX. The Exhibition will be at the Austin Convention Center and the official hotel of the event is the Hilton Austin. ■

STMA STUDENT CHALLENGE AND OTHER EVENTS DRAW RECORD NUMBER OF STUDENTS TO CONFERENCE

Penn State wins both Student Challenge competitions for 2nd time in 3 years

More than 160 students attended the Sports Turf Managers Association's Annual in January. Students were able to take advantage of many activities specifically geared to them including a student networking session, student lunch and educational track, and the STMA Student Challenge presented in partnership with the Foundation for Safer Athletic Field Environments (SAFE) and Platinum Sponsor Hunter Industries.

Of the students in attendance, more than seventy-five percent competed in the Sixth Annual STMA Student Challenge. Through a generous donation from the SAFE Foundation, the winning 2-year team and the winning 4-year team in the STMA Student Challenge each receive a \$4,000 grant to fund a practical learning lab at their college or university. An event record 129 students, representing 22 colleges, universities, and technical schools, entered a total of 33 teams. Teams of up to four students participated in a multiple choice exam on athletic turf and sports field management topics and identified plants, insects, diseases and weeds, as well as performing a written case study.

For the third straight year, the winning team from the 4-Year Competition came from The Pennsylvania State University. Penn State Blue Team 409 team members were Nicholas Gialloretto, Kyle Hivner, Chuck Roman, and Dan Sidle. Gialloretto was on last year's winning team as well. Purdue University made a very strong showing, taking second, third and fourth, respectively, out of 21 total teams in the 4-Year Competition.

Twelve teams competed in the 2-Year Competition, with Penn State Team 207 taking top honors. Teammates Niels Dokkuma, Sean Kearney, Erik Tolzman, and Adrien Van Dyk studied intensely leading up to the exam. Second place Virginia Tech Team 206 and taking third place was Kirkwood Community College Team 205, whose school was competing in the event for the first time.

Hunter Industries' continued sponsorship helped to defray some of the Student Challenge competitors' conference costs. For the first time, the results of the Student Challenge were announced out of the Hunter booth in the exhibition, drawing more than 150 people onto the floor in the waning hours of the show.

In addition to their \$4,000 grant, the two first place teams' will also have their team name etched in the traveling Student Challenge Cup. At the Annual STMA Awards Banquet, they received replicas of the Cup and individual medals and will provide an article to be presented in an official STMA publication sometime in 2010. Second and Third place winners received plaques and medals and the Awards Banquet. ■

New STMA Chapters installed

Two new STMA affiliated chapters were officially presented their chapter gavels by Chapter Relations Chairman Amy Fouty, CSFM, during the Chapter Officers' Training Session (COTS) held during STMA's national conference. The Oregon chapter was formed last spring and the gavel was presented to its president, Debra Kneeshaw, with chapter member Mike Hebrard in attendance. The Central Florida Chapter completed the required paperwork, this winter and its chapter president Randy Fisher and board members Scott Grace and George Lawson received the gavel. ■