



STMA members serving their communities

Editor's note: Here are some outstanding examples of Sports Turf Managers Association members' volunteering time and effort to improve their communities. Of course there are many, many such examples throughout the country, these are just a few high-profile examples.

>> STMA MEMBERS have been volunteering at the Little League World Series for 15 years.

LITTLE LEAGUE WORLD SERIES

Come the end of summer, millions from around the world turn their eyes to South Williamsport, PA when kids from all over the world play in the Little League World Series. With the players, coaches, managers and umpires on the field, announcers, scorekeepers, security, ushers, cameramen and television production crews in place everything is set to play ball.

But wait, what about the field, is it ready? Is it safe for play? Will it look good on television? That portion of the series is left to members of Keystone Athletic Field Managers Organization (KAFMO) the Pennsylvania chapter of the STMA.

"The chapter has been honored to assist Little League Baseball with field preparation

for 15 years" says Jeffrey T. Fowler, Penn State Cooperative Extension educator and Board member for the KAFMO Chapter and national STMA. "We arrive before the series begins, we level the playing surface, edge the fields, resod any areas that are worn from summer play, all in preparation for the games that will be played and televised during the 10 days of the series.

"Our number one goal is providing a safe playing surface for the kids to play on," says Fowler, "our goal is to provide the safest fields possible.

"We have approximately 40 volunteers that are a part of the grounds crew. These volunteers are members of the state and/or national chapter of Sports Turf Managers. People take vacation time from their own work schedules and leave family at home to come to the series to assist with field preparations. Some stay for the entire time (2 weeks), others help out for a few days," Fowler continues. "The crew that we assemble is second to none for the LLWS, not only do they have the fields at the forefront of their minds, but their professionalism is second

to none. Having people realize that there is more to having safe field than putting down lines and mowing grass is also a goal of the group. Every night we remove the lines, groom and water the infield, broom the edges of the grass, repair clay in the home plate circle and on the pitcher's mound, we tarp those areas as well, we groom the warning track and have the field ready for the next day."

Thirty-four televised games in 10 days during late August takes its toll of the fields. Yet every year the grounds crew manages to battle through

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whatever is thrown their way to pull off one of the greatest youth sporting events in the world. The grounds crew is proud of what they are able to help out with during the series. Many of the crew members have



➤ **Left: WORKING** at The Boys and Girls Club of Metropolitan Phoenix. **Right: PATAKI PLAYFIELD** at Bear Mountain, NY, an ideal location for demonstrating the efficacy of modern, environmentally friendly turf management strategies.

been attending for 15 years or more. Some have been bring their own children with them to help out. According to Fowler, “That is the next generation of sports turf managers; I tell kids all the time, the fastest way to the major leagues is with a rake in your hand.”

STABILIZER SOLUTIONS, INC.

As Phoenix geared up for the Major League Baseball All-Star Game this past July, the future pros of America were being given the opportunity to play on the same field as their heroes. Stabilizer Solutions, Inc. a Phoenix-based soil technology company, joined with the MLB, the Arizona Diamondbacks and other local companies to renovate the Boys and Girls Club of Metropolitan Phoenix. Stabilizer Solutions donated nearly 70 tons of infield mix to help the field maintain optimal moisture levels. The product has been used on each of the “Diamondback” charity field renovations to date.

PATAKI PLAYFIELD AT BEAR MOUNTAIN, NY

What do millions of people, the Brooklyn Dodgers, the New York Giants, the New York Knicks, a team of turf management experts, the 1940 National Archery Championships, and thousands of classic cars on balmy summer evenings all have in common? They’ve all loved the George E. Pataki Playfield at Bear Mountain, frequently called “The greatest playground in the world.”

The 10-acre lawn, leveled by inmates from Sing Sing Prison when the site was intended as their new prison yard, has hosted countless sports gatherings, parties, and lazy afternoons in the sun since the Harriman



Gift of 1910 stopped the prison and created Bear Mountain and Harriman State Parks.

It is an oasis of green and in the past 2 years has been the subject of an unusual “green” partnership between the Palisades Interstate Park Commission and a team of turf management experts.

Bear Mountain park managers, Elizabeth O’Loughlin and David Bourne, in conjunction with the PIPC Research and Development Department, have worked with Kevin Trotta, a turfgrass specialist, STMA member, and the New York Team Captain of the Global Sports Alliance (GSA) and Jennifer Grant, an Assistant Director of the New York State Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM) at Cornell University, and Coordinator for Community IPM on this eco-friendly playfield project.

As a highly visible, much loved and much used turfgrass field, the area is an ideal location for a demonstration lawn project to show the efficacy of modern, environmentally friendly turf management strategies. Soil tests have been used to reduce the risk of excess nutrients and runoff, by fine-tuning the amount and source of fertilization inputs in an effort to facilitate the strategic management of soils to promote healthy grass growth. As a means of promoting sustainable systems, preference has been given to natural organic fertilizers over synthetic organic and there has been no use of chemical pesticides.

In addition to the obvious recreation and other lifestyle gains from turf, there are many environmental benefits: the bioreme-

diation and filtration properties of turfgrass allow it to clean our air and water; the photosynthetic process captures atmospheric carbon and generates oxygen; the green, evapotranspirative leaf canopy cools the air; and turf’s biomass secures and protects top soil and reduces runoff. The art and science of turfgrass management have developed to the point where a high visibility, intensively used playfield can be maintained at an acceptable ecological cost and at a desirable level of functionality and aesthetic appeal.

EWING IRRIGATION

Special-needs children in Arizona now have a safe place to play ball thanks to the Miracle League of Arizona. Last spring, Ewing Irrigation contributed to the new Dan Haren Miracle League Field in Scottsdale with the donation of a water-efficient irrigation system for the turf, trees and desert landscaping around the field.

Ewing President, Doug York, also enlisted the help of DTR Landscape Development for the landscape construction. Owner Dick Roberts said he saw the benefits of the field firsthand, as a girl with cerebral palsy ran the bases for the first time. “Her face lit up,” Roberts said.

Ewing’s contribution to the landscape included about \$5,000 in irrigation and other landscape products. Hunter Industries also donated water-efficient MP Rotators and an I-CORE controller with flow sensing capabilities. Plant material was provided by Southwest Sod and Baseline Trees.

Mike Gausden, West Division Manager of Hunt Construction, one of the major contributing businesses, said suppliers and vendors like Ewing contributed a total of \$300,000 of in-kind materials for the project.

The Dan Haren Miracle League Field’s inaugural season began in April. The idea for the field was sparked in 2008 when Los Angeles Angel pitcher Dan Haren (then an Arizona Diamondback) told his father, Dan Haren Sr., that he wanted to do something to benefit the community. Haren Sr. then founded the Miracle League of Arizona with the purpose of giving children with physical and mental challenges the opportunity to play baseball. Though the fundraising efforts were difficult, various community organizations helped the Miracle League raise \$1.7 million for the field in just 3 years. ■