

Green Media announces Most Influential People

GREEN MEDIA, A DIVISION OF M2MEDIA360 — publisher of Outdoor Power Equipment, Landscape and Irrigation, Arbor Age and SportsTurf magazines — proudly presents the 2011 selections for “Most Influential People in the Green Industry.”

Green Media’s “Most Influential People in the Green Industry” were nominated by their peers for their ongoing contributions to the Green Industry. Nominations were reviewed by Green Media’s in-house panel, and the 2011 selections for “Most Influential People” were chosen from throughout the Green Industry.

The six professionals honored here exemplify commitment to the Green Industry, and have exhibited a widespread influence on their peers. Green Media congratulates all of those chosen for this year’s list of “Most Influential People in the Green Industry.”

Dan Ariens

When notified that he was selected among the “Most Influential People in the Green Industry” in 2011, Dan Ariens, president and CEO of the Ariens Company in Brillion, Wis., said that he was “surprised” and “flattered.”

“There are a lot of very important and influential people in the OPE industry and have been for a long time,” said Ariens, the great-grandson of Henry Ariens, who founded the Ariens Company in 1933. “If I were voting, I think I would’ve picked some others.”

Given all that Dan has accomplished in the OPE industry and the Wisconsin business community, leading to numerous productivity and leadership awards, the honor should certainly come as no surprise.

In addition to enjoying tremendous success with the Ariens Company, Dan has served as chairman of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) and twice as chairman of OPEI’s Green Industry and Equipment Expo Committee. He has received two gubernatorial appointments from two different Wisconsin governors representing two different parties, including his present appointment as the vice chair of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. He has served on several boards of directors for educational entities, for-profit companies and non-

profit economic development groups in the state, including the New North (an 18-county regional economic development board) and Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce. Plus, he is one of only seven members on the Executive Committee of the Green Bay Packers’ board of directors.

“I’ve always had this philosophy to emulate or follow or learn from people that I would consider mentors,” he said, “and there’s a lot of people in business and outside of business that I’ve looked at as people that I wanted to shape myself around their character and ethics and their morality and their approach to life in general.

“One of those that crosses both business — this business — and life would be my father (Mike Ariens). He’s certainly been a very important influence on me from a long time back.”

“He’s a very strong moral authority in terms of what’s right and what’s wrong,” Dan said of his father. “He was always a great teacher of ‘No, we’re not going to do that. That’s just not the way we do things.’ I think the lessons that I learned from others were more about having my father as a guidepost.”

Based on the lessons learned from his father, and shortly after succeeding him, Dan quickly established his own company expectations by creating a set of five “Core Values”: 1) Be honest; 2) Be fair; 3) Keep our commitments; 4) Respect the individual; and 5) Encourage intellectual curiosity. “We talk about those multiple times a day,” Dan said. “I mean that’s just not something we just stick on the wall. That’s a conversation we have every day, around every decision.”

Dan, who with his wife of 27 years, Julie, has five children between the ages of 15 and 25, was asked how he would like to be remembered when he retires and what the future of the company holds for subsequent generations. He laughed and said, “I’m pretty young. You know I think just as kind of the way I hope people think of me now. I’m ‘just a guy from Brillion’ that likes to come in (to work) and loves this business. I think at the end of the day, if we achieve our 20-year vision, I’d like to be able to look back at that with my peers here and say, ‘We did alright. We created a lot of jobs. We built a nice company here, and it’s on a platform that’s sustainable, and it’s time to turn it over to the next generation.’”

— Steve Noe

Bill Harley

With 28 years of trade association management experience, Bill Harley was selected in late 1999 to follow in the footsteps of Dennis Dix, who served as president and CEO of OPEI for 27 years. Harley officially took over for Dix when he retired at the end of March 2000 and proceeded to make several notable contributions to the Green Industry before he too retired from OPEI at the end of August 2011.

A Chicago native who received a bachelor’s degree in marketing from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, Harley worked for two-and-a-half years as a bond underwriter at the Hartford Insurance Company before beginning his association management career in 1972 with the Air Conditioning Contractors of America. In 1981, Harley was selected as the executive vice president of the National Utility Contractors Association (NUCA). He served as NUCA’s CEO until 1999 when he was selected by OPEI to succeed Dix.

Harley recently reflected on his successful reign of nearly 12 years with OPEI during an interview with OPE.

OPE: With 28 years of association management experience in other industries, why did you decide to enter the OPE industry by joining the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) in January 2000, knowing that you would succeed Dennis Dix as president and CEO in March of that year?

BH: Eighteen of those 28 years, I served as CEO of the National Utility Contractors Association prior to joining OPEI. After 18 years, I was ready to explore new opportunities and challenges. At the time, OPEI offered both. Dennis Dix’s 27 years as OPEI’s CEO established a consistent, respected and stable organization. Dennis also built a financially viable international trade association. Having that strong foundation was a key factor in my decision to accept the CEO position at OPEI.

OPE: Having retired as the president and CEO of OPEI as of Aug. 31, 2011, and had a few months to reflect on your nearly 12-year run with the association, what are your proudest accomplishments, fondest memories and biggest regrets (if any)?

BH: I honestly don’t have any regrets. I was very fortunate to work with a dedicated and talented team in the OPEI staff. I’m most proud of building upon and maintaining the financial

viability of the organization. The industry faced — and continues to face — substantial regulatory and legislative challenges, which require a significant commitment of resources (finances and personnel). OPEI immersed itself in those challenges, and we were able to actively engage those issues and not deplete the financial reserves. Indeed, we increased those reserves despite the economic plunge that began in 2008. OPEI's senior vice president of finance & administration, Jean Hawes, is an exceptional steward of OPEI's finances.

The consolidation of OPEI and the Portable Power Equipment Manufacturers Association (PPEMA) in 2001 is also high on my list of accomplishments. Having the OPEI and PPEMA member companies under one umbrella organization was essential for the manufacturers and suppliers. A splintered manufacturer/supplier industry in today's business and political climate would have been very costly to the industry, and not just in financial terms. OPEI was strengthened immeasurably with the addition of the PPEMA member companies.

Achieving the merger of OPEI's trade show, the International Lawn, Garden and Power

Equipment EXPO, with the Green Industry Expo (GIE) is probably my major accomplishment, certainly the most visible to the broad Green Industry. Obviously, this achievement was not the work of one person. The key person in the merger was Warren Sellers, Sellers Expositions. Without his vision, perseverance, experience and knowledge, the combined trade show would have never become a reality. As you know, he continues as the show executive today. Warren and I and the Sellers Exposition team were a great partnership.

I must also salute several major participants who were essential to the trade show merger. Dan Ariens, the Ariens Co., served as chairman of EXPO at the time, and he played a major leadership role. Jerry Grossi and Rick Doesburg, representing PLANET, and Jeff Bourne, representing PGMS, were integral and essential to seeing GIE+EXPO become a reality.

I can't conclude any discussion of GIE+EXPO without acknowledging the support and active involvement of the Kentucky Exposition Center (KEC) and the Louisville Convention & Visitors Bureau (LCVB). KEC President Harold Workman, and vice president

of sales and marketing, Linda Edwards, and LCVB President Jim Wood and executive vice president, Karen Williams, are committed to the continued success of GIE+EXPO.

Lastly, moving OPEI into a much greater level of government relations and public affairs activity is a source of pride. My two previous associations were heavily engaged in legislative affairs, and I knew what it took to be a respected player in Washington. I recognized Kris Kiser's quality reputation, experience, expertise and knowledge when I hired him in 2007. He deserves great credit for OPEI's accomplishments in those arenas and, of course, today he serves as OPEI's president & CEO.

OPE: Any final thoughts?

BH: I would like to thank you, Steve, and Outdoor Power Equipment magazine for this recognition. I would also like to congratulate the other "most influential people" selected by your respected publication. I would be remiss in not specifically congratulating Dan Ariens, president of Ariens Co. and a past chairman of the board for OPEI, and Kris Kiser, OPEI's current president and CEO.— Steve Noe

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Kris Kiser

The U.S. Congress and the state of Indiana's loss in 2006 became the gain of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) and the OPE industry in 2007.

Inspired by a political upbringing and 20 years in Washington, D.C., Kris Kiser, president and CEO of OPEI, decided to leave his job as vice president of state and international affairs at the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers (AAM) in Washington, D.C., in 2005, and return home to Indiana to run for Congress in 2006.

Although the move backfired on him — he was defeated by the incumbent in the primary election — he's been able to draw upon that experience in fighting on OPEI's behalf.

"It's something I always wanted to do," said Kiser of running for Congress. "And believe me, you learn lessons you can't get in any classroom. It's very hard, it's very hard. It's a very tough environment nowadays. And today, it's the politics of destruction. It's destroy the other candidate."

Given Kiser's upbringing and background, it's easy to see why he was inspired to run for Congress, why he was disillusioned by the process, why he landed on his feet at OPEI, and why he was selected as one of the "Most Influential People in the Green Industry" in 2011.

Born in Indianapolis but raised in Seymour, Ind., a small agricultural town just north of Louisville, Ky., Kiser said that he was introduced to politics at a very early age.

"My folks were very active (politically)," Kiser said. "It was always part of the conversation, very aggressive debates. One of my two sisters actually married a politician. My brother-in-law is a prosecutor in Indiana. So, it's just always been a part of our lives."

Kiser was involved in campaigns as a youth, became a deputy registrar at age 18, and worked for politicians while earning his bachelor's degree in political science and history from Indiana University in Bloomington in 1981. Then, before joining the private sector, he had the great fortune of working nine years for noted international affairs expert and former Congressman Lee Hamilton, who represented Indiana's ninth district for 35 years before retiring in 1999. Kiser served as a special assistant in Hamilton's personal office and two years as chief administrative staffer with the Joint Economic Committee during Hamilton's chairmanship of the committee, affording him the opportunity to work his way through law

school at the University of Louisville. Kiser and Hamilton have remained in close contact and remain lifelong friends; Hamilton has met with the OPEI Board on two occasions and has even been featured as a speaker at the OPEI annual meeting.

"Lee is a very substantial man," said Kiser. "He was a highly respected guy and not a partisan. He was a problem solver. He was all about fixing things, and he would work across the aisle. He didn't see color. He didn't see party politics. He was a problem solver. He was a very substantial influence on my life."

After his failed run at Congress in 2006, Kiser said that he "fell into" becoming involved in the OPE industry. It started when a member of OPEI — who was familiar with Kiser's work with automakers and knew of his fuel expertise and Capitol Hill experience — informed him that OPEI was looking to expand into public policy by hiring a "Hill person," and encouraged him to apply. So, Kiser met with Bill Harley, president and CEO of OPEI, and was hired in the newly created position of vice president, public affairs in August 2007.

"It was good timing for me, and it was good timing for (OPEI)," said Kiser, "because the biggest thing that's happening that's going to affect every one of my members is this fuel business, the change in the fuel, whether it's ethanol or isobutanol or what have you."

Since joining OPEI, Kiser has sat at many tables, serving as the chief advocate for the OPE industry before the U.S. Congress and Administration on a wide range of issues related to fuels, emissions, manufacturing, environment and water, and he has won several battles. He has played an instrumental role in an ongoing battle with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over its WaterSense program, resulting in the EPA's recent removal of a landscape restriction that required only 40 percent of a building's landscape consist of turfgrass.

"I always want OPEI to be relevant. I want OPEI to be at the table," Kiser said. "If you're going to be talking about my industry, or something that affects my industry, whether it's a regulation or a piece of legislation, we need to be at the table. And we need to do the work that earns us a seat at the table, because you have to earn a seat at the table." — Steve Noe

Mark Chisholm

Mark Chisholm is a third-generation arborist with the Aspen Tree Expert Company,

Inc., Jackson, N.J.; a three-time winner of the International Society of Arboriculture's (ISA) International Tree Climbing Championship (1997, 2001 and 2010); and a highly sought-after consultant and industry spokesman for the world of arboriculture. He is a regular presenter at industry trade shows; he lectures at Rutgers University, Cornell University and Hofstra University; and he performs on-the-job training for professionals around the globe.

In addition, Chisholm has a daily influence on others via his industry website, Tree Buzz.com, which he launched in 1999 and now has more than 6,000 members and countless visitors who don't sign up as members. The site averages approximately 5.2 million hits per month.

"With every tree, every customer, and everyone I've spoken to about tree care, I have tried to display my most professional image to try to change the perceptions about the industry," he said. "I've always tried to touch them with the idea that I'm going to try to make a difference to the image that's out there, and show them that we're very skilled, we're very well thought out, we're very articulate, we describe what we're doing, we're scientifically based — and I make sure I display that."

Stephen Cieslewicz

With more than 30 years of industry experience, Stephen Cieslewicz has established himself as a leading expert in utility vegetation management (UVM). In working with utilities, regulators and service providers around the world, he has been directly involved in the bulk of tree and power line issues of note.

Cieslewicz, president and chief consultant at CN Utility Consulting, was a principal UVM investigator for the Joint U.S./Canada Power Systems Outage Task Force, a principal author of all UVM-related reports following the blackout on Aug. 14, 2003, and is currently a member of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) FAC-003 drafting committees. Cieslewicz has testified as an expert at many significant legal, regulatory and legislative hearings. He is a past president of the Utility Arborist Association (UAA) and a recipient of numerous awards, including the UAA Utility Arborist Award, UAA President's Award, and certificates of appreciation from the U.S. and Canadian governments.

"While I am extremely proud of the work I

have done, and continue to do, with the Utility Arborist Association, International Society of Arboriculture, and the Edison Electric Institute, I think my biggest contribution to the industry is what I would call UVM industry advocacy work,” said Cieslewicz. “Since my work as one of the principal UVM investigators for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on the US/Canadian 2003 Blackout Task Force investigation, a good portion of my time has involved UVM laws and regulations. In addition to serving on each of the subsequent NERC FAC-003 drafting teams (developing the regulation that mandates the transmission UVM work of all North American utilities), over the last decade I have made routine trips to Washington, D.C., participated in numerous state regulatory hearings, and provided written and direct testimony concerning the importance and urgency of UVM work to lawmakers and federal and state agencies.”

Tom Delaney

As Director of Government Affairs for the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET),

Tom Delaney reviews any bill that might impact the landscape industry and works with state groups to deal with it.

“While we can’t always be out there, we can alert people and train them to be out there, and then connect them with other groups that can help,” he said.

Originally from New York, Delaney majored in Agriculture at the University of Georgia. He then worked for the Georgia Department of Agriculture for 15 years in the entomology and pesticide division, where he was in charge of pesticide enforcement, certification, and training. In 1989, Delaney took a job with the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA), handling state government affairs. Delaney served as executive of PLCAA for almost five years, but returned to the government affairs role the year before PLCAA merged with the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA) to form PLANET.

Delaney was instrumental in negotiations regarding the H-2B worker program — he suggested that returning immigrant workers not count against the H-2B cap. It was a way of not

increasing the cap, but still increasing the number of workers landscape companies were allowed.

Another issue Delaney recently tackled was the WaterSense 40-percent managed turf limit. Delaney and PLANET gathered people to invest in hiring a specialist to evaluate what EPA was doing and put on a formal program for EPA about the WaterSense proposal as to why it wouldn’t work and was not a good idea. In November 2011, PLANET and other green industry groups celebrated a victory in this area when the EPA issued a Notice of Intent to remove the 40-percent turfgrass restriction from the WaterSense program’s landscape specifications. ■

If you would like to nominate a Green Industry professional for consideration for the 2012 list of “Most Influential People in the Green Industry,” you may e-mail that person’s name, contact information, and why he or she has been influential to the Green Industry, to mostinfluential@m2media360.com.

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