

## No sports turf manager on site? The SAFE Foundation can make a difference

**THE FOUNDATION FOR SAFER ATHLETIC FIELDS** for Everyone (SAFE) recognizes that not every field is managed by a qualified professional. Neighborhood fields are particularly challenged because they are often the lowest priority for maintenance, and inexperienced volunteer parent groups may have the responsibility for upkeep. The economy also impacts these fields; maintenance dollars for low profile fields may be the first to be eliminated.

SAFE has developed an industry-wide initiative, *Sports and Recreation Fields-Safety First* to create awareness about the importance of managed sports surfaces. This initiative will fund education, outreach, research and scholarships to advance the safety and sustainability of playing surfaces and help reduce sports field injuries due to the playing surface.

Other organizations acknowledge that the playing conditions of fields and recreation areas are critical to the safety of athletes:

- The National Athletic Trainers Association has identified the need to check the playing area before practice or a game. They recommend checking regularly for debris, rocks, water and other hazards and removing these hazards before play.
- SAFE Kids, USA, the non-profit organization that promotes injury prevention for kids, cite properly maintained recreation areas for children enrolled in organized sports through schools and community clubs, as a proven intervention strategy for injury prevention.
- In a position statement by the American Medical Society for Sports Medicine, the team physician is charged with assessing environmental concerns and playing conditions.
- The Institute for Preventative Sports Medicine states that players competing on a potholed schoolyard surface often suffer ankle injuries, indicating that the safety of playing surfaces is key.



• The Alliance to Address Youth Safety has as one of its four Calls to Action: to ensure sports equipment and fields are checked for safety and best conditions.

These are important assertions by major organizations. What is missing is the “how” to make athletic fields and recreation areas safer. This is where SAFE can make a difference.

The initiative “Sports and Recreation Fields-Safety First” begins with a 5-year fundraising campaign with a goal of \$1 million. SAFE introduced this fundraising effort to its membership in January. Called the “Grass Roots Campaign” so that members and chapters can show their ground level support, SAFE is seeking \$100 from members over 5 years (\$20 per year) and \$1,000 from corporations over 5 years (\$200 per year). Donors who pay their total 5-year amount in one lump sum, or donate \$100 or more will be recognized as a member of our Foundation Club. Foundation Club members receive a commemorative lapel pin.

STMA offers an ACH option for members to spread the payment out over 12 months and have it automatically deducted from a checking account.

As funds are raised, SAFE will be pursuing partnerships with community and industry organizations to collaborative develop its programs that will directly benefit communities. One element of its plan is to conduct an assessment to profile communities at-risk for poorly maintained sports fields. SAFE, with STMA, will engage its chapter network and its committees to help develop Best Management Practices for these at-risk fields.

For more information on how SAFE is impacting the profession or to donate, go to [www.STMA.org](http://www.STMA.org) and click on the SAFE Tab. ■

## Start now! STMA Field of the Year application ready

**NOW IS THE PERFECT TIME** to begin preparing your 2012 STMA Field of the Year Application. The program requires photos from throughout the year and completion of the STMA PCI four times, so it is important to begin working on those items as soon as you can.

Submitting an entry to the Field of the Year Awards program is now entirely electronic. Applicants are required to fill out the writable form, which is located at [www.STMA.org](http://www.STMA.org) under the Professionalism Tab/Awards, and submit it electronically. Photos are also required to be created in a PowerPoint presentation. The PowerPoint can be submitted through our online Dropbox account (preferred) or applicants can send a CD or jump drive to STMA headquarters. These materials must be received at STMA headquarters no later than October 15, 2012.

The Awards Committee implemented the change to an electronic process to allow for remote judging of applications, to provide a fair process for all applicants regardless of the budget spent on the packaging of the submittal, and to focus on the field management practices.

By applying for the STMA Field of the Year Awards, members gain recognition from their employers and community. Community athletic facilities are a point of local pride, and by applying for this program, and showcasing your expertise in the process, you can draw media attention and gain respect throughout the community for the hard work you, your crew and volunteers undertake making your field look and play its best.

Each Field of the Year Award winner is presented with a special plaque at the STMA Awards Banquet, held each year at the STMA Conference and Exhibition. This year, the Awards Banquet will be the evening of January 18, 2013 in Daytona Beach, FL. In addition to the plaque, each STMA Field of the Year winner will receive free conference registration, three nights of lodging at the conference hotel, STMA signature apparel, and a feature article in the official publication of STMA, *SportsTurf Magazine*. These awards are generously supported by STMA's official awards sponsors Carolina Green Corp., Covermaster, Inc., Hunter Industries and World Class Athletic Surfaces. ■