

# President's Message

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## Affirmation costs nothing

**M**Y POSITION as Virginia's extension turfgrass specialist means I spend a lot of time in cars traversing the state. What makes my time pass more quickly is my portable satellite radio receiver (my extension peers refer to it as "Goatley's redneck radio") which means I rarely hear a commercial, and I listen to hours upon end of talk radio. You listen long enough and you are sure to hear things that catch your attention and give you pause to think just a little bit more.

In one day's random scanning of channels, I by chance landed on one of the religious channels, where I heard the host begin to read an anonymous letter from a Catholic priest bemoaning the fact that he really did not think he was making a difference in his ministry. The host opined that probably what this priest needed more than anything else was a little affirmation. He asked the audience, "When was the last time you had given any affirmation?"

I thought I knew what the host was talking about, but I figured I had better look it up later to be sure. The dictionary says that the root of the word (affirm) means "to declare one's support for; to uphold or defend." I frequently hear that employee satisfaction surveys indicate that affirmation is almost always more meaningful than financial rewards in maintaining employee morale. Given the current state of most budgets, I can't argue with anyone that says I would rather have some financial adjustments than affirmation ... you certainly can't eat or wear affirmation! However, there is a lot to be said about receiving some positive reinforcement, and the only cost is a little of your time.

The whole affirmation thing got me to thinking of a holiday movie classic that so many of us will watch for the umpteenth time over these next few weeks. In "It's a Wonderful Life," George Bailey gets the chance to see what a difference he made in others' lives. We probably won't have anything quite so dramatic as Clarence the angel affirm any of our lives, but think about how a letter of praise in support of a colleague might positively impact their life? What about that employee that works for you that always goes above and beyond? Have you given him or her the recognition they deserve? And don't forget family and friends, where affirmation might be the most critical element in being the best spouse, parent, or friend you can possibly be.

Affirmation is a big part of STMA's Annual Conference and Exhibition through our Founders Awards where we recognize some of our most dedicated peers for their service to the sports turf industry. This month's issue focuses on our conference and the myriad of programs and activities going on in Daytona Beach. And you might leave this issue somewhere your boss can see it, in hopes they might send some affirmation your way by sending you to Florida to gather with your peers. Take care! ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Goatley". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.