

SAFE in 2013: a new year for Safer Athletic Fields (for Everyone)

STMA'S CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION, The Foundation for Safer Athletic Fields (SAFE), was formed in 2001. It began awarding scholarships in 2003 and has funded a number of scholarships and educational programs since then, totaling more than \$250,000.

In 2010 however, the Board of Trustees, after having conducted extensive strategic planning and research, concluded that SAFE could do more than award scholarships. It implemented a number of changes to its outreach efforts, including: changing its mission to focus on external matters relevant to the industry ("to enrich communities through championing safe, sustainable sports and recreation fields for all athletes"); officially changing its name to The Foundation for Safer Athletic Fields for Everyone; changing its by-

laws; adding new board members; creating both a strategic plan and marketing plan; and developing the "Grass Roots Initiative" fundraising program to engage STMA members and leverage their support.

In 2013, SAFE continues to move forward. As announced at STMA's Conference and Exhibition in Daytona Beach, MLB's Baseball Tomorrow Fund Executive Director, Cathy Bradley, has been named chairperson of SAFE's Board of Trustees. Also this year, SAFE plans the launch of an all-new website and social media initiatives that will help further engage and educate members.

As many STMA members are aware, SAFE conducts a variety of fundraising activities during the STMA Conference. It raised more than \$35,000 this year in Daytona Beach from

the golf tournament, silent and live auctions, raffles and the second annual successful casino night; this is \$8,000 more raised than the previous year.

As SAFE and the Grass Roots Initiative looks to the future, it will be very active in outreach and continue to innovate in the awarding of scholarships, funding of educational programs, creating partnerships with various stakeholders, performing assessments and engaging STMA chapters and committees. We appreciate your continued support!

For more information on SAFE, how to donate and updates on the launch of the Foundation's new website, SAFEFIELDS.org, please visit stma.org.-Shant S. Thomas, STMA sales & marketing manager

SAFE continues recognizing excellence in sports turf management education

THE SAFE FOUNDATION has been funding scholarships since its inception in 2000. In 2009, it added its first Educational Grant and a second educational grant was added in 2011.

The Gary Vanden Berg Internship Grant honors Gary Vanden Berg, CSFM, for his contributions to the industry in promoting internships. Gary was the Director of Grounds for the Milwaukee Brewers until his death in 2011 and his commitment to creating enriching learning experiences for interns was legendary throughout Major League Baseball and the sports turf industry at large.

This grant is awarded in late fall for an internship completed during the spring or summer of that same year. STMA student members in good standing who are currently enrolled in a minimum of six credit hours, or were enrolled in a minimum of six credit hours in the semester just before the internship, are eligible to submit for the \$1,000 grant. The grant is intended to offset the costs a student may have incurred while interning. In addition to receiving the \$1,000 grant, the winner also receives a full conference registration and three nights lodging at the next STMA National Conference and Exhibition, where he/she will be introduced during the Awards Program.

The 2011 Gary Vanden Berg Internship Grant winner was Aaron Bryant, from the University of Tennessee. Aaron previously interned with the New York Mets and is currently working with the San Diego Padres for a second consecutive season as a seasonal assistant. He graduated from the University of Tennessee in 2011.

"The Gary Vanden Berg Grant helped me tremendously in offsetting costs associated with expenses accrued over the course of my internship in New York City," Aaron said. "It was a privilege to be honored for an award named after one of the leading professionals in our industry. I hope to one day be an instrumental part of giving back to an association that has done so much for me. Namely, I want to incorporate interns into my management strategy as I look for ways to help future generations of sports turf managers. The networking, internship/job, and learning opportunities are incomparable and pivotal as part of being a member of the Sports Turf Managers Association."

The 2012 Gary Vanden Berg Internship Grant winner was Nik Wooldridge, from Colorado State University. Nik interned at Fenway Park with the Boston Red Sox and was also the recipient of the Dr. James Watson Undergraduate Scholarship for 2012.

The STMA Scholarship Committee selects the Terry Mellor and Gary Vanden Berg grant winners.

SAFE is currently seeking long-term funding for the Gary Vanden Berg Internship Grant. To donate please send payments to: The SAFE Foundation, P.O. Box 411172, Kansas City, MO 64141-1172. The SAFE Foundation Federal Tax ID# is 47-0839745. SAFE is a Charitable 501(c)(3) Corporation. Donations are tax deductible as allowable by law.

STMA's ongoing social media conversation

"SOCIAL MEDIA IS KILLING THE ART OF THE CONVERSATION."

I disagree. As STMA's new sales and marketing manager, my job is to ensure we are continually improving on our conversational skills—be it throughout the year in communicating our association's value and benefits to our membership or relaying the latest news on our ever-changing industry.

Many have heralded conversation's "end" because of social media's inherent ephemeral nature, but my belief is that a targeted mix of relevant social media tools helps us *enable* and *enhance* it. To that end, we will be expanding STMA's efforts throughout the year on both Facebook and Twitter with more frequent posts.

The benefit STMA has over some of our larger peer associations is the existing real world connectedness our members have with their peers throughout the United States. My belief is that any social media effort we may hope to undertake highlights those friendships/connections—rather than creating artificial ones—and radiates out to those who might be thinking of joining. It is this congeniality that I experienced for the first time at our conference in Daytona Beach which I believe distinguishes and differentiates us in the marketplace.

On the socialmediatoday blog, Jeremy Brown puts forward his "C2 theory" that stipulates all social media should be more than just a "connection" (a one-way street)...it should be about "communication" (a two-way street). Brown says, "Connection is the first step. The first 50 percent. Conversation is the second step. The second 50 percent.

- They're reciprocal. One cannot exist without the other.
- Connection means first contact. Conversation means further contact.
- Connection is the attention getter. Conversation is the sustainability of attention.
- Don't connect and not converse. Don't converse without connecting first.
- Connection means resonance. Conversation means discussion of resonance."

Stay tuned for more of STMA's conversation.-Shant S. Thomas, STMA sales & marketing manager