

# President's Message

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## Get the recognition you deserve

**S**TMA CEO KIM HECK delivered an excellent professional development exercise at our summer Board meeting. She asked us to identify what the Board wanted most for our membership. On this particular day, the answer was "recognition." We want appropriate recognition for you from your clientele, your employers, the public, etc., for your expertise and professionalism in sports turf management. The exercise included an "in your wildest dreams, what could you visualize?" segment. One suggestion was a weekly sports turf management show on ESPN, followed by having our own network. Then we discussed a more realistic target. How about a screen shot describing the field, the playing surface, AND the sports turf manager; similar to that seen almost every week on televised golf events? The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America has done a wonderful job of gaining recognition for its superintendents. The public's perception of the value of golf course superintendents has never been higher.

Most successful sports turf managers are very much like an umpire or referee at the top of their profession: if you do your job well, you typically are not noticed and it is only when mistakes occur that "recognition" follows. This is not a profession dominated by outgoing personalities eager to talk about themselves or their jobs.

Another challenge is that far too often the "recognition" we get occurs due to elements beyond our control (weather extremes, overzealous event scheduling, vandalism, etc.). Your Board continues to explore ways that STMA can refine its steps to more quickly and efficiently respond on behalf of its membership regarding crises and unforeseen problems that arise on sports fields.

As a member, YOU must be ready to educate others about our profession as well. If you work at a facility that regularly hosts televised or radio-broadcast events, develop (and deliver to your Sports Information Director or similar contact) a brief information sheet describing the field, its maintenance, and most importantly, include background information on YOU (experience, education, staff, CSFM?, etc.). Even if you don't have a SID to work with, it is likely that your fields will host tournaments or events that will be featured in local or regional print media. I regularly see articles in our local paper touting the economic impact of hosting a regional baseball tournament, and you can bet that out-of-town teams won't (at least not for long) come to play on sub-standard sports fields. Your efforts should be recognized and appreciated! STMA has a media advisory template on its website that you can use as a guide to provide this important information to media outlets.

What else can we do? Consider contacting local sports stations and news shows. I reached out to hosts of local sports-themed radio shows, suggesting interviews with the sports field managers at Virginia Tech and the University of Virginia on how they get their fields game-ready for the football season. Within 4 days both had responded positively asking for the contact information for Emerson Pulliam (VT) and Jesse Pritchard, CSFM (UVA). If we all take small steps such as these, significant positive recognition could be generated for our profession. ■

