

## From the Sidelines



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## Turfgrass goes to Washington

**G**ROUND WAS BROKEN last month for a new exhibit at the US National Arboretum called “Grass Roots,” the centerpiece of a 4-year initiative that focuses on the environmental, economic, aesthetic, and recreational benefits of turfgrass in athletic fields, landscapes, and golf courses. Turfgrass scientist and professor Frank Rossi, PhD from Cornell University delivered the keynote address. No word yet whether Ted Cruz will try and defund the project.

The National Arboretum, operated by the Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Research Service, and the National Turfgrass Federation have collaborated in developing this new public exhibit to highlight modern uses of turfgrass. The exhibit is “committed to helping citizens, including national decision-makers, understand new and emerging science underlying our nation’s beautiful lawns, athletic fields and gardens,” according to National Arboretum Director Dr. Colien Hefferan.

The project will feature a website accompanying the exhibit, professional and scientific symposia, and homeowner-focused workshops and demonstrations, directed to audiences ranging from children to policymakers, to showcase the value of turf to the environment and the importance of research to continue to leverage that value.

According to Dr. Hefferan, the interactive outdoor exhibit will highlight the results of turfgrass research and communicate that managed turf landscapes are essential in conserving soils, retaining and filtering water, offering a venue for socialization and recreation and enhancing the aesthetics of a property. The exhibit will be thematically linked over the nearly 450 acres of the National Arboretum by displays and gardens. For more info see <http://www.usna.usda.gov>.

STMA members Michael Sullenberger and Jimmy Rodgers, CSFM, were at the ceremony; their comments here are courtesy of STMA’s new public relations firm, Buffalo Communications:

“This exhibit will benefit STMA members because the organization will do a great job of getting out information about the Grass Roots Exhibit to our membership and updates as they occur over the next four years,” Sullenberger said.

“Anytime you have a spotlight on the science of our industry happening now in Washington, D.C., only good things can happen, not only for the association but for the industry of turfgrass,” Rodgers said.

Sullenberger added, “Without the STMA, I wouldn’t be in the field that I’m in today. I grew up working on a sod farm and that was my hobby. Now, my hobby is my dream job and the association has helped develop it.”

“STMA was the first professional organization I joined in 1996. It was the only place that I knew of where I could sit around and talk about something I was really passionate about with other people who were doing the same thing in other points of the country,” Rodgers said. ■

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