

KAFMO's involvement with Little League

OVER THE PAST 15 YEARS the Pennsylvania Chapter of STMA, officially the Keystone Athletic Field Managers Organization (KAFMO), comes together at the end of summer as millions from around the world turn their eyes to South Williamsport, PA. Kids from all over the world play the game of baseball in hopes of playing in the Little League World Series. Sixteen teams of players 11 and 12 years old descend on the Little League complex in Lycoming County, PA in hopes of being crowned the only true sports "World" Champion.

The Little League World Series has become a grand event. Television coverage of every game played during the series on the ABC/ESPN family of networks has turned up the exposure that the event has seen. In 2012 the television ratings were high with millions watching and attending. It is estimated that the event injects \$20 million dollars into the economy of Lycoming County.

With the players, coaches, managers and umpires on the field, announcers, scorekeepers, security, ushers, cameramen and television production crews in place everything is set to "Play Ball!" But wait, what about the field, is it ready? Is it safe for play? Will it look good on television? That portion of the series is left to members of KAFMO.

"The chapter has been honored to assist Little League Baseball with field preparation for 15 years," says Jeffrey T. Fowler, Penn State Cooperative Extension Turfgrass educator and Board member for the KAFMO chapter (and national STMA). "We arrive before the series begins, we level the playing surface, edge the fields, resod any areas that are worn from summer play, all in preparation for the games that will be played and televised during the 10 days of the series.

"Our number one goal is providing a safe playing surface for the kids to play on," says Fowler. Fowler is quick to credit Seth Whitehill, groundskeeper at the complex, for his hard work and dedication throughout the year. "Seth does a great job year round preparing the fields for the Series; he applies fertilizer, sprays and mows throughout the year when there are no television cameras around to see everything that is going on." Seth graduated from Penn State in 2008 with his bachelors d in Turfgrass Science.

"We have approximately 40 volunteers that are a part of the grounds crew. These volunteers are members of STMA or one of its chapters. People take vacation time from their own work schedules and leave family at home to come to the series to assist with field preparations. Some stay for the entire time (2 weeks), others help out for a few days," Fowler says. "The crew that we assemble for the Little League World Series is second to none; not only do they have the fields at the forefront of their minds, but their professionalism is [supreme]. Having people realize that there is more to having a safe field than putting down lines and mowing grass is also a goal of our group.

"Every night we remove the lines, groom and water the infield, broom the edges of the grass, repair clay in the home plate circle and on the pitcher's mound, and we tarp those areas as well; we groom the warning track and have the field ready for the next day."

Thirty four televised games in 10 days take their toll of the fields in South Williamsport in mid-August. Yet every year the grounds crew manages to battle through whatever is thrown their way to pull off one of the greatest youth sporting events in the world. The grounds crew is proud of what they are able to help out with during the series. Many of the crew members have been attending for 15 years or more. Some have been bring their own children with them to help out. According to Fowler, "That is the next generation of sports turf managers; I tell kids all the time, the fastest way to the major leagues is with a rake in your hand."

STMA recognizes and thanks its 25 & 30 year members

STMA salutes its long-time members for their dedication and commitment to the association and the profession of sports turf management. They have supported STMA through the years in many ways beyond paying annual membership dues. These highly involved members have attended and presented at our conferences, participated in leadership roles in the association, and served as volunteers on committees and in their individual chapters. Their efforts have guided STMA to being a strong and vibrant association of professionals. Thank you!

Celebrated 30 YEARS in 2012

Harold Howard, Ph.D.
Turfscience, Inc.
Phoenix, AZ

Paul C. Zwaska

Technical Sales Support
Beacon Athletics
Middleton, WI

John A. Fik, CSFM

Grounds & Sports Field Consultant
Sodexo Education Services
Vermontville, NY

Celebrating 30 YEARS in 2013

Mark Hodnick
(Retired) City of Indio
Beaumont, CA

James R. Watson

(Retired) VP Agronomist
The Toro Company
Littleton, CO

Brian Petonic

Turfgrass Supervisor
M-NCPPC Maintenance
& Development
Upper Marlboro, MD

Celebrated 25 YEARS in 2012

Rich Ericsson
Head Groundskeeper
Three Village Central
School District
E Setauket, NY

Ken Mrock

Head Groundskeeper
Chicago Bears Football Club
Lake Forest, IL

Frank T. Bowyer

Manager of Grounds
Amphitheater Public Schools
Tucson, AZ

Marc Van Landuyt

President
Van's Enterprises, Ltd.
Waukegan, IL

Greg Petry

Executive Director
Waukegan Park District
2000 Belvidere St
Waukegan, IL

Celebrating 25 YEARS in 2013

Gil Landry, Jr.
Retired Professor/Turfgrass
Management
University of Georgia - Griffin
Campus
Griffin, GA

John Anderson

Arthur Clesen, Inc.
Naperville, IL

Ted Thorn

Director/Grounds
University of Iowa
Iowa City, IA

C. Tom Rudberg, CSFM

Athletic Turf Division Manager
S & S Tree & Horticultural Specialists
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Jim Frelich

Turf Consultant
J R Frelich & Associates, LLC
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Timothy M. Burke

Park Superintendent
Town of Westport
Westport, CT

Stephen E. Horne

Director of Field Operations
Scranton Wilkes-Barre Yankees
Moosic, PA

Leo A. Goertz

Athletic Fields
Maintenance Manager
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX

David D. Minner, Ph.D.

Professor
Iowa State University
Ames, IA