



From the Sidelines

Eric Schroder
Editorial Director
eschroder@specialtyim.com
717-805-4197

Why aren't you a member?

As spring sport athletes began hitting the fields here up North after the brutal, forever winter, thousands of folks whose job responsibilities include preparing and maintaining those fields were and are working overtime. Heck, even many of you fortunate enough to live in warmer climates have probably faced different problems than normal following the USA's SOB Old Man Winter.

How many people are facing problems that they really aren't sure how to handle? And if so, where do they turn for help? Conditions such as we're seeing now provide a terrific example of why ponying up the dough for membership in the Sports Turf Managers Association is money well invested (plus your employer might reimburse you—ever asked?).

The STMA founders got together initially because they wanted to improve the sports turf industry through sharing knowledge and exchanging ideas. And that's still the true core mission of the association. Conference attendees' discussing their field issues and offering advice to one another over coffee or beers is a great STMA tradition treasured by members. But you don't have to attend the Conference to have access to this advice; your membership alone can do it.

Here are just a few of the topics about which the STMA provides information, and the sources of this info are the best minds in the industry: professional development; turfgrasses; construction and renovation; recordkeeping; environmental stewardship; cultural practices; turfgrass insects, weeds, and diseases; and university research.

The biggest resource though is the membership itself. For example, I have yet to hear a story about a member responsible for 20 acres of parks and fields in a small town calling the guy or gal who manages Division I fields at the state university and being told, "I'm too busy to help you" or "I'm too good to return a call from a parks and rec guy." I'm not saying it's never happened but if anyone reading this knows of such a situation please let me know and I'll report it here, aka eat my hat.

Of course there are other benefits to membership as well, such as access to the Members Only section on www.stma.org where you'll find a Career Center that offers help in finding or filling positions in the industry, as well as resume and interviewing tips and other career advancement assistance specific to our industry. There's also the Playing Conditions Index, a tool developed to assess the playability of your fields at specific points in time. Using it can provide guidelines to maintenance practices, assist in communicating with user groups, and prove to your boss why you need more resources.

And of course there are normal association benefits of membership like a directory of members (to find that Division I person who won't rebuff you) and awards programs. Perhaps the most important among these benefits is the Certified Sports Field Manager program, an earned designation that signifies you as a serious professional with expert credentials.

I am sure there are plenty of turf managers out there who consider themselves serious and professional who aren't members; maybe it's time to show your family, friends, bosses and co-workers just how serious and professional you are by joining the STMA. ■

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1030 W. Higgins Road
Suite 230
Park Ridge, IL 60068
Phone 847-720-5600
Fax 847-720-5601

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STMA OFFICE
805 New Hampshire Suite E
Lawrence, Ks 66044
Phone 800-323-3875 Fax 800-366-0391
Email STMAinfo@STMA.org
www.STMA.org

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