

#### Direct Mail List Sales

MeritDirect, Jim Scova  
Phone: (914) 368-1012  
jscova@MeritDirect.com

#### Subscription Services

Phone: (847) 763-9565  
Fax: (847) 763-9569

#### Reprints

Debra Welter  
dwelter@specialtyim.com

#### Group Publisher

Jeff Patterson  
Phone: (763) 383-4458  
jpatterson@epgmediallc.com

#### Account Representatives:

##### Chris Pelikan

Senior Account Manager - East  
Phone: (954) 964-8676  
cpelikan@epgmediallc.com

##### Peggy Tupper

Senior Account Manager - Mid-West  
Phone: (763) 383-4429  
ptupper@epgmediallc.com

##### Leslie Palmer

Senior Account Manager - West  
Phone: (248) 731-7596  
lpalmer@specialtyim.com

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## President's Message

David J. Pinsonneault, CSFM, CPRP  
dpinson@lexingtonma.gov



## Spring thoughts: "Can Do" does not always mean "Yes"; don't hide

**S**pring has finally arrived after such a long winter of being cold and confined indoors. Spring invariably brings a multitude of practices and games of soccer, lacrosse, baseball, softball and even track meets. Hopefully the hard work you did in the fall coupled with your renewed energy from Conference has your fields ready to shine for users young, old and in between. Safe and playable is what we do. This profession also brings a positive "can do" attitude to our jobs. It sets us apart from other professions. We always try to accommodate our user groups and stakeholders; sure you can play today; sure we can prep the field after a rain storm; sure we can set up portable lights for extended play; sure we can mow the field again for proper ball roll or to put in a pattern; and so on.

There are many other examples of how we as professionals accommodate our user groups so they can go out and enjoy their activities without having to worry about the playing surface. All of this is done while keeping the fields safe and playable. The spring season brings time crunches and bad weather so we have to elevate our games so they can play theirs.

Here in Lexington the Public Grounds Division is the "can do" provider of fields for sports and special events. But "can do" cannot always mean "yes." For example, we are in the planning stages for the Lions Club Carnival. This event used to be held every year on our varsity baseball and softball fields. Each July for a week there are large rides (Ferris wheels are big), food and game trailers, and thousands of people enjoying the grass fields and leave their mark. When the carnival leaves on Sunday the fields have to be repaired for our semi-pro baseball team to use on Wednesday. In 2010 the Town approved a \$1.5 million capital project to reconstruct all of the fields at this complex. Our "can do" became you cannot use these fields due to the investment and the elevated quality of the field. But our "can do" attitude did not leave the group hanging and we helped them find another park area to use that, although requires turf repairs after use, does not impact play. "Can do" means we will try everything to get a game or event in but it does not mean sacrificing a season for that one game or event. There has to be a balance.

My second thought is "don't hide." You all do great work, often with limited budgets, staff, resources, and time while still providing quality fields. Be the visible "go to" person that is the expert in all matters relating to your fields. Actively communicate with your user groups so they know and understand your maintenance program, what their responsibilities are and how you handle inclement weather. Let them know that if issues arise you need to be the first to know.

There are appropriate times to remain hidden in the background but not when it comes to field maintenance and use. It took years of discussion but we finally have teams picking up their own trash, not hitting or throwing into fences and not taking batting practice from the front of the mound. We also have soccer teams realigning their fields to spread out wear areas. Being visible and up front makes it easier to get buy-in and lets them know that what you do provides them with safer fields. It also makes it easier to say to no a game or practice when the condition of the field is at stake. This is budget time for many of us so being the leader and promoting what you do helps to secure the resources you need to provide safe playable fields. This profession is very humble which is good but we need to be visible at the right times so we have a say. Remember to make an impact and not an imprint. Enjoy the spring! ■