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New Mission, Vision guide STMA into the future

During the STMA Summer Board meeting a full day and a half day was dedicated to strategic planning. Facilitators from Leading Associations helped the Board look to the future and create five strategic goals. As part of the process, the Board spent time evaluating its mission to be certain it answers the question, “Why does STMA exist”? Consensus is that our mission has been functioning more as a vision for STMA. Thus, the Board created a new mission for STMA and officially established a vision, which it has not previously had.

These new guideposts for STMA are:

Mission: STMA advances professionalism in sports field management and safety through education, awareness programs, and industry development.

Vision: To be the recognized leader in strengthening the sports field industry and enhancing members’ competence and acknowledgment of their profession.

Although the strategic plan has not yet been finalized, there was agreement around five strategic areas: communication and brand awareness; the value of commercial members to the association; establishing our members as environmental stewards; the importance of

natural grass athletic fields to outdoor sports; and providing members with relevant and timely continuing education. Once the objectives for each goal are set, which will include metrics for success, STMA’s Committees will be heavily engaged to brainstorm tactics on how to best reach these objectives.

The planning process included an exercise on defining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the association and also an assessment on the success of the current strategic plan. STMA has made significant progress on its current strategic plan, which is scheduled to be completed by December 31. Highlights from that plan will be shared in **SportsTurf** at the end of the year, and the new plan will be rolled out in January during the conference and in the magazine.

The primary facilitator, Sam Albrecht, CAE, gave high praise to the board for their dedication. He wrote in his summary report, “This is a well-functioning group with the best interests of the membership and the industry at the top of their lists. The passion and commitment in the room was as good as I’ve seen in any organization.”—By Shant S. Thomas, STMA Sales & Marketing Manager & STMA Staff. ■

STMA’s public relations and marketing engagement efforts see tangible results

Beginning in the Fall of 2013, STMA engaged a multipronged public relations and marketing effort to more comprehensively tell key audiences, including sports turf managers’ employers, the general public, and those in sports media, about the benefit of the profession and necessity of having a sports turf manager on staff. This effort took an initial two-pronged approach: one, hire a public relations firm with sports and general media contacts to get the word out about STMA and sports turf managers; and two, produce and air a PBS special entitled “Spotlight On: The Field.” Both of these efforts were detailed by STMA CEO Kim Heck in San Antonio at STMA’s Annual Meeting and Lunch last January.

Buffalo Communications: telling STMA’s story

STMA hired Virginia-based Buffalo Communications (BC) in November 2013 to spearhead an aggressive media relations effort on behalf of the association. Buffalo is a division of Billy Casper Golf, owner-operator of more than 130 golf properties nationwide, and has offices in New York, Phoenix, Boston, Minneapolis and Pinehurst, NC, according to its website.

The ultimate goals of engaging a firm such as a BC are varied but interconnected. The driving impetus and goal behind everything, how-

ever, is the increase in profile of the sports turf manager and profession as a whole. Some strategies to achieve this include:

- Telling “human stories” of STMA members and the extraordinary jobs they do. This makes field management something the layperson can more easily relate to. Buffalo Communications reaches out to sports turf managers across the country and helps facilitate connecting these individuals with members of the media in their area.

- Identifying technology and trends in field management to underscore the specialized, expert nature of the sports turf management profession. This effort also stresses why having a sports turf manager/Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) on staff is critical.



Glenn Gray

PR specialist Glenn Gray is STMA’s day-to-day contact and works closely with headquarters staff to identify and promote STMA members and trends.

For example, Gray is currently working with Marcela Munoz and Roberto Gurgel in Brazil to extend the media lifecycle of natural grass storylines (all 12 World Cup stadiums). He recently reached out to Sporting KC to secure quotes from Matt Besler and Graham

Zusi about their preference for playing on natural grass during the World Cup. Glenn and BC have also recently conducted a number of interviews with STMA members including Seth Whitehill (Little League Baseball), Jeff Salmond, CSFM (University of Oklahoma), Mike McDonald, CSFM (University of Minnesota), Michael Stachowiz (National Park Service), Tony Leonard (Philadelphia Eagles), Dave Mellor (Boston Red Sox) and others.

Buffalo Communications media relations efforts have resulted in stories of sports turf managers appearing in *Sports Illustrated*, *Minnesota Star Tribune*, *BleacherReport.com*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Boston Globe*, *The Tennis Channel*, *USA Today*, Michigan's Big Show, *Washington Post*, *Recreation Management*, *SportsBusiness Journal* and more. For a complete list of this media relations effort, please visit stma.org.

If you are a member with a great story to tell, reach out to Sales and Marketing Manager Shant Thomas at stthomas@stma.org so we can get it out there!

Spotlight: On the field, and on STMA

Many sports turf managers don't like to be in the spotlight; they prefer to let their great playing surfaces speak for themselves. Recently however, the profession was highlighted in a PBS special entitled "Spotlight: On the Field" produced by the association and aired nationally. STMA CEO Kim Heck played the special at the association's Annual Meeting and Lunch in San Antonio this past January with a promise to update members when the results of those airings came in. "Spotlight: On the Field" was a rousing success!

With this specific type of video, the interested producing party works with a company to put together the piece, which is then submitted to a central pool of videos that PBS stations across the country can then draw from. STMA was guaranteed a minimum number of airings, but that number can be exceeded if station managers receive requests to re-air a broadcast or simply choose to re-rerun it.

In a letter to STMA, Tower Productions Vice President of Communications Michael Casey stated the video "did well," adding it "air[ed] 878 times in 49 percent of all U S television households, reaching a gross audience of 4,431,900 viewers." These airings took place in 207 major markets, from New York, NY and Bowling Green, KY to Las Vegas, NV and Terre Haute, IN.

Thank you to all who assisted in the production of this video to place a much-needed spotlight on our fields. The video is available for viewing on the association's website, stma.org and via our YouTube channel (accessible via stma.org). -By Shant Thomas, Sales and Marketing Manager. ■

Press coverage and other highlights: sports turf managers in the news

"I've always enjoyed competing at the highest level on natural grass and I'm glad FIFA decided to go this route with all 12 World Cup venues," says Matt Besler, Sporting KC and US men's national team defender. "I was very impressed with the playability and conditions in Brazil, especially how well the field drained in Recife for our final group stage match against Germany."

Quote secured by Glenn Gray/Buffalo Communications, July 31, 2014

"Natural grass fields take much more energy to prepare for elite competitions like the FIFA World Cup," says Graham Zusi, Sporting KC and US men's national team midfielder. "The time spent preparing them is much appreciated by the players, as the touch and feel on grass is more consistent."

Quote secured by Glenn Gray/Buffalo Communications, July 31, 2014

The Boston Globe

"Maintaining immaculate yet playable grass tennis courts is a balancing act for head groundskeeper Mike

Buras, CSFM and his 12-person crew at Longwood Cricket Club in Chestnut Hill. The fibrous *poa annua* species used on Longwood's 25 grass courts is a native variety that is frequently labeled a weed, but Buras says when properly managed, it makes a desirable court surface. 'Grass is a living thing, and we learn to push the limits to make the courts as good as can be,' said Buras, 53."

From "Serving up the right grass for tennis" by Cindy Atoji Keene, Boston Globe correspondent

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2014/08/02/groundskeeper-serves-grass-courts-for-tennis/1p0fU2zYXkskbFPTq8giul/story.html>



"When the Giants opened up a new team headquarters called Timex Performance Center (since renamed Quest Diagnostics Training Center) in 2009, the organization hired [Rob] Davis to be its head groundskeeper. This past week, Davis, also a member of the Sports Turf Managers Association, put

the finishing touches on a Quest facility that will host its second consecutive training camp after the Giants moved home from the University at Albany last year."

From "Behind the Scenes: New York Giants Head Groundskeeper Shares His Insight" by Kevin Boilard, Featured Columnist, BleacherReport.com

<http://bleacherreport.com/articles/2135198-behind-the-scenes-new-york-giants-head-groundskeeper-shares-his-insight>



"Andy McNitt is a leading authority on all grasses, both natural and artificial, as the director of the Center for Sports Surface Research at Penn State University. He is also a long-time member of the US-based Sports Turf Managers Association. McNitt sees no reason why the Blue Jays will not be able to lay grass down within Rogers and have it thrive.

"It's going to be a big investment in the lights, but certainly we have the technology to grow grass indoors," he said."

From "Rogers Centre looking to make artificial grass a thing of its past" by Robert MacLeod, The Globe and Mail (Canada)

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/sports/baseball/field-of-dreams/article18955544/>