

From the Sidelines

Project EverGreen still matters



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Nearly 3 years ago Project EverGreen launched a national media campaign to inform consumers about the positive effects of well-maintained green spaces, including sports turf. Today the organization, led by executive director Den Gardner, continues to focus solely on its mission to educate and inform consumers on the environmental, economic, and lifestyle benefits of green spaces.

According to Gardner, current projects include:

GreenCare for Troops. A national initiative to help military families with lawn care while the major breadwinner is serving in the Middle East. "What a great way for sports turf managers as a group to volunteer their time for just ONE family," says Gardner. "Go to www.projectevergreen.com and sign up. We have more than 2,700 families signed up and need many more volunteers. All you need is a lawn mower in most cases."

Yard Enthusiasts of America (YEA). This new affinity club is for all consumers and provides a place for them to go to become a member (it's free), take part in trivia contests, and win prizes. "Consumers can get information on how to maintain their green spaces," Gardner says. "It's our outreach program to get consumers talking to each other about caring for green spaces."

Habitat for Humanity. Efforts continue in some cities. The Sports Turf Managers Association last year provided the lawn and landscaping for two houses in Lawrence, KS, and the association also provided assistance in Philadelphia and Raleigh, NC on youth field renovations orchestrated by Project EverGreen.

"There is a tremendous disconnect between consumers and the efforts needed by those in the lawn and landscape maintenance business, including sports turf managers, regarding caring for green spaces," says Gardner. "For your industry, our market research shows that nearly 100 percent of consumers expect a well-maintained playing field for the sports their children participate in.

"Yet by the same token, they don't understand, unless they are volunteering to maintain these fields, all the work it takes to keep undesirable weeds, pests, and diseases from turf," he says. "They don't understand that efficient irrigation means much more than turning on the water only at night to conserve resources, that mowing practices are crucial to the overall safety of kids playing on sports surfaces, for example.

"We can only be successful if national associations like STMA, its members, and other readers of your magazine help us tell the story to the specific consumer audiences that use the fields they prepare," Gardner says. "Our tagline, 'Because Green Matters,' has never been more important than today."

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The Official Publication Of The Sports Turf
Managers Association

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SportsTurf (ISSN 1061-687X) (USPS 000-292) (Reg. U.S. Pat. & T.M. Off.) is published monthly by M2MEDIA360, a Bev-Al Communications company at 760 Market Street, Suite 432, San Francisco, CA 94102. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sportsturf, P.O. Box 2120, Skokie IL 60076-7820. For subscription information and requests, call Subscription Services at (847) 763-9565. Subscription rates: 1 year, \$40 US & Poss.; 2 years, \$65 US & Poss.; 1 year, \$65 Canada/Foreign Surface, 1 year, \$130 Airmail. All subscriptions are payable in advance in US funds. Send payments to Sportsturf, P.O. Box 2120, Skokie, IL 60076-7820. Phone: (847) 763-9565. Fax: (847) 763-9569. Single copies or back issues, \$6 each US/Canada; \$9 Foreign. Periodicals postage paid at San Francisco, CA and additional mailing offices. COPYRIGHT 2007, SportsTurf. Material may not be reproduced or photocopied in any form without the written permission of the publisher.

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