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Local artist Sue Caudell paints and designs logos for the field.

recreation department are very helpful. The state also has provided funding. Because we're a small community and we know people, we are able to ask for assistance. Also, people can more

readily see the results of our efforts.

"We have 25 grounds crew volunteers during tournaments," says Worley. "Many of them have been

on the crew for several years and are the parents of players. We also have several teenagers and some 8 to 10 year olds who have taken an interest in it. Though my 28 years as a State Farm Insurance agent has little impact on groundskeeping, other adult volunteers bring job skills we've put to use. We have a diesel mechanic, a hardware store owner, a surveyor, a maintenance supervisor for another recreation complex, two phone company employees, a trenching company owner, a metal worker and some industrial employees.

"We do train all of our new crew members before they work on the field on their own. Matt Taylor and I have maintained contact. I take my grounds crew over to the Greenville Braves field every year. Unless you know how it's supposed to feel where the grass meets the infield dirt, you'll never get it right.

"But our program's success is not just due to our grounds crew, our

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The volunteer team prepares the field for an upcoming game. The crew is responsible for all aspects of field maintenance and preparation.

entire volunteer network is excellent—those handling the administration of the league, the concession stand workers, the coaches. It's a huge community effort."

Worley extends special thanks to Bob Troup of Troup's Studio, the League's photographer and mayor of Toccoa, and to local artist, Sue

Caudell, who volunteers her talents to design the logos and paint them for the tournaments.

A big part of the volunteer program is educating the players, coaches and parents. Worley, or another experienced grounds crewmember, will meet with them and explain how to rake, handle rain situations, line the field, and inspect for holes. They also teach the players not to dig holes. They instruct the coaches to have the players warm up in the outfield, all throwing in one direction, and encourage the coaches to hit infield practice from the infield dirt instead of the turf.

Field Use

Worley says, "Every summer there are 142 games played on the Senior League Field during the regular season. With 135 practices held as well to prepare for the spring and fall seasons, this field is used nine months of the year. In 1998, Toccoa hosted the 10 teams of the Junior League State Championship. In 1999 and 2000, we

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Field volunteers take a time out to pose for the camera.

hosted the Southern Region Senior League Championship."

"There are three other 200-foot fields in Doyle Street Park. One is the softball field where we host the Southern Region Tournament for girl's softball. It's held in early August, at the same time as we host

the Senior League Southern Region Tournament for 15 to 16 year old boys. Our grounds crew splits up to get both fields ready at the same time. We'll also host the Senior League State Tournament on the field beginning July 14. Ten teams compete in double elimination, beginning with four games a day for

three days. We have two weeks between the close of that tournament and the start of the two regional tournaments."

Tournament participants continually follow their stay with rave reviews for the field, the personnel and the city. These tournaments bring tourism to the community generating business for hotels, restaurants and other local stores. The Toccoa Little League considers tournaments a way to help repay the sponsors and contributors who have been supporting the program for 40 to 50 years.

Major Projects

Worley says, "Six years ago [1994] the League built the three story press box which also includes restrooms, concessions and storage for field maintenance equipment and supplies. The governments of the City of Toccoa and Stephens County provided money from their

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Volunteers Know How to Have Fun

by Connie Worley

Before game time the crowd hears "The William Tell Overture" being played over the loud speaker system and 15 to 25 crew members dressed in khaki shorts and matching green groundskeeping t-shirts run onto the field armed with brooms and rakes. Each person knows their task as this bit of showmanship is choreographed as carefully as any Broadway Show. Just as the last notes of the "William Tell" fade away, these showmen run off the field to the sound of cheers and applause, their task completed within three minutes. They have performed this bit of fanfare before every tournament game for two years now. Creativity and love of the sport shines in the pre-game show as well as in the beauty of the field.

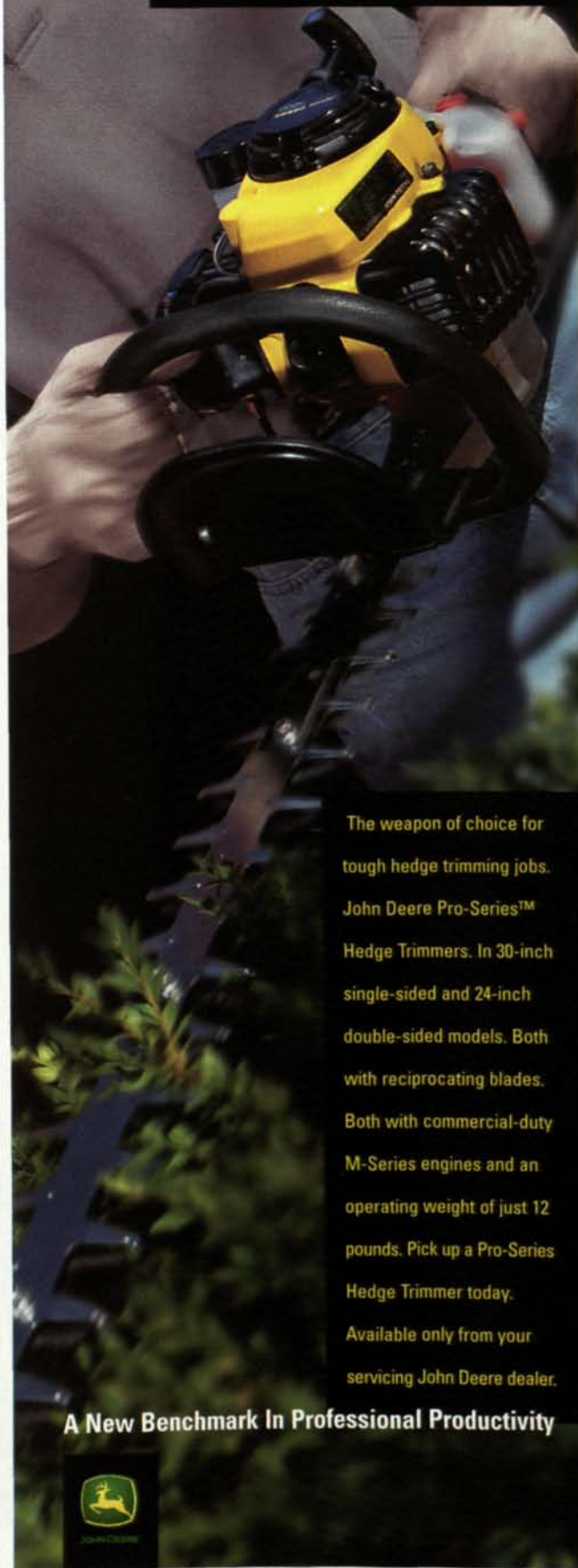
budgets as well as the use of heavy equipment and manpower to do the grading. Community service workers and local contractors were involved as well. The majority of the labor came from Little League volunteers.

"In 1998, the Little League volunteers installed nearly \$75,000 of new Musco lighting per Little League International specifications thanks to funding acquired with the help of State Representative, Jeanette Jamieson. Volunteers installed a new irrigation system on the field in 1999. We've also refurbished the dugouts, erected a donated flagpole and placed a donated granite marker."

Other projects focus on the maintenance area. For example, in late March of 2001, the infield was deep-drill aerated and topdressed with sand using a borrowed topdresser and tractor. There are other good cultural practices Worley would like to implement, but can't due to lack of funding. Timing also is a critical factor since volunteer power isn't always available.


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Worley says, "I joined STMA in 1994 and have made the Bradenton, St. Louis and Tampa Conferences. It's great for learning new techniques, seeing new tools, networking and for confirming what you do is correct."

And the learning process continues. When the new softball field was constructed last year, Worley got a lit-

tle more scientific using the jar and water test to measure the soil content. With the test showing sufficient clay, they brought in 2 inches of sand to create a 60 percent clay, 40 percent sand mixture.

The Latest Project

The latest project began when fall ball wrapped up last October 15. The right field of Senior League field was

extended to 300 feet. Worley says, "This involved cutting down several pine trees. The city used their backhoe to remove the stumps. We brought in several hundred tons of fill dirt. We built a 200 foot long, 5 foot high retaining wall out of Allen block. Twenty volunteers had 90 percent of the wall installed in one day. Still to be finished as of early March, was trucking in additional dirt to finish backfilling before the new fence is installed. A light pole and the score board also will need to be moved. We've prepared the new part of the field for sodding with TifSport Bermudagrass."

Worley's target date was April 1 for the April 7 opening game. If weather delays occurred, he planned to leave the old fence in place until the new fence was installed and all the sod in place so play would not be disrupted. The goal is to do nothing that would keep the teams from practice or play. Worley notes the crew does much of its work on Sunday afternoons and at night. It's not unusual to see the lights on from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m. as they complete projects with no disruption for the players.

Worley says, "The change will be better for our local league. It brings a new dimension to the field literally and figuratively. It makes the outfielder more important. The change also meets Little League field length recommendations and should allow us to be in the running for certain additional tournaments."

And the dreams continue. Worley has plans to renovate the infields of two other fields in the Toccoa Little League program.

He says, "I'm proud that we've earned Field of the Year honors through volunteerism and cooperation among the city, county and state governments, the business community and other groundskeepers. Everyone working together can make great things happen."

Steve and Suz Trusty are partners in Trusty & Associates of Council Bluffs, Iowa. Steve is Executive Director of the Sports Turf Managers Association.

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by Luke Yoder

Baseball Field Maintenance

Putting the baseball field to bed ready to play each winter is key to an early start in the spring. The typical opening day in Major League Baseball is April 1 to April 9.

Spring field preparations are aimed at producing conditions as near perfect as possible for opening day. Working closely with me toward that goal on the new Pittsburgh Pirates field are two topnotch assistants: Steve Erickson and Rich Hook.

Our new field spent the winter covered with an Evergreen tarp. In our spring start-up timetable, we planned to remove the tarp around March 1, weather permitting, and apply a starter fertilizer and micronutrients. We plan to leave the tarps off, though we may need to put the infield and foul area tarps back on due to a cold spell. Removal of the outfield tarp takes all day, so we'd like to avoid putting it back on.

We'll start up the irrigation system during early to mid-March, depending on the weather, and will water in the fertilizer. We'll do the first mowing between the first and fifteenth of March.

We set in the mowing pattern a week before the first game. We'll also apply the season's first infield top-dressing a week before the first game.



Grounds crew work on the field at PNC Park, which opened earlier this month in Pittsburgh

We check all the mounds, home plate and batters boxes to make sure the moisture content and packing meet our standards because they have been covered all winter. By March 25, the infield will be set, with all the infield clay graded out. We'll edge the field about three days before the first game.

Around March 20, we start watching the 10-day weather forecast to gauge the need to apply the big infield tarp. We monitor the weather daily

starting on March 25. We'll tarp if rain is forecast, taking a proactive approach to the projected weather conditions.

We monitor turfgrass conditions daily once the field is uncovered, pushing growth if necessary, but with caution not to push too hard. If we have a warm day in early March and soil temperatures in the 30s or 40s, we'll use our SubAir system to draw the warmer outside air into the cooler root zone to speed up growth.

continued on page 22

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