



Who Is Replacing the Aged Golf Course Technician?

This could be part of the answer.

Since last year I have been involved with an advisory board at the Illinois Central College (ICC) in Peoria. The Turf Equipment Technicians Association (TETA) was asked by ICC, through Luke Cella and the ITF, to participate in a plan to develop the Outdoor Power Equipment Training Program (OPETP). The program would include, but not be limited to, the recruitment, training, and placement of certified outdoor power equipment technicians.

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TETA is, of course, representing the golf industry. The issue first discussed was the availability of students to enter a program in Peoria. Secondly, would there be placement in the area after graduation? Third, how would successful marketing of the program happen? Fourth, what is the need for trained technicians at dealerships, landscapers, turf operations, golf courses, etc.?

We all know there is a great need for qualified technicians in the golf equipment field. There has always been a shortage of technicians in this unique and viable career. The “golf maintenance barn” is not a shed with lawnmowers and some golf carts crammed in, as many people might think. The “equipment maintenance facility” as I like to call it, has more diverse equipment than any lawnmower shop or dealership by far.

Illinois Central College, less than three hours from Chicago, has four very successful programs that are housed at its campus. First, the Diesel Equipment Technology Program trains a student to earn an Associates in Applied Science Degree. The student is trained to be an entry-level technician who will work on agricultural and construction equipment, trucks, dozers, graders...just about anything with a diesel engine. ICC successfully places all of its students in eight-week internships at local area distributors and dealerships. Second is the Auto Technician Program, third, the Caterpillar Dealer Service Program. The fourth successful program is the General Motors Auto Service Education Program.

All of these have the same philosophy. The support of the manufacturer is a major part of the success of the two-year programs. The successful addition of the Outdoor Power Equipment Technician Program (OPETP) would also require the support of many major manufacturers. An actual shop, staged with the equipment and tools along with OEM sponsored machines for hands on tear-downs, diagnostics, and operations would be a necessity. The golf industry giants will be included in providing the equipment and materials related to golf-specific education.

Today the acceptance and awareness of the certified technician in the outdoor power equipment field is at hand. The Equipment and Engine Training

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Council (EETC) certification tests would all be a part of the OPETP program at Illinois Central College. This level of achievement should be taken seriously.

Along with the support of the manufacturers, area employers anxiously await the qualified personnel who will enter their facilities for internships and/or full-time employment. The placement of an intern at a golf course is a long awaited and welcome event. Along with the equipment dealers, municipalities, construction contractors, landscape groups, ICC wants to include an invitation to the golf courses in the region to consider sponsoring an intern for an eight-week period. There are many times throughout the year when we could all use a couple extra hands. The intern could help in maintaining equipment or get involved with the winter tear-down segment of the off season. An eager intern coming out of such a program is serious about his or her future. An internship will also help an individual advance in the golf industry and expe-

rience the hidden gem of a career that I have enjoyed for 13 years.

Another concern is the availability of students to enter such a program. How can the industry be presented to the high school student? My local high school district, among others, is phasing out their tech programs, or soon will be. Auto technology still tops the interest list for what hands-on kids want to do after high school. So the marketing of a two-year program with on-campus living experiences and off-campus internships will be another challenge for the college.

I offered, on behalf of ICC, to present this idea to you and ask for your response. If you would like more information about the proposed Outdoor Power Equipment Technician Program please do not hesitate to contact me. The advisory committee will meet before spring. The anticipated start up of this program may be as soon as the fall of 2008.



There are many times throughout the year when we all could use a couple extra hands.

While I complete this letter, in the early New Year, the temperature is holding at 48°. We just filled the hopper at the range with balls again. Unbelievable!


Thank you for your continued support. Next time, we'll talk about what's new from Anaheim and the G.I.S show.



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