



New Plans from the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation

Whether we like it or not, another new age is upon us. Entire markets, huge corporations, small businesses and countless industries are all being affected by global economic uncertainties. The business of golf is no exception. The drop in housing, rising unemployment, saturated golf markets, flat line of growth, personal time availability, rising fuel costs and even a tumbling stock market have all influenced our industry adversely. A tightening of the budget purse strings is a burdensome problem we are all facing today, and conventional thinking is no longer an acceptable recourse of action. Finding new and more efficient ways to manage our facilities is a path for us to succeed.

Similar logic has to be applied with the operations of the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation (ITF) as well. It is the board of directors' responsibility and goal to find new ways to raise revenue to fund turfgrass research in Illinois. It is also our responsibility and goal to discover new ways to educate our membership and fully utilize all available resources. The thought process of raising money, while clearly understanding the budgetary constraints that each and every one of us is dealing with, is the challenge that confronts us now.

Obviously one way of securing income is by placing a control on spending. From an organizational standpoint, our biggest expenditure is also our biggest income producer, the Illinois Professional Turf Conference (IPTC). This past year the IPTC changed locations to the Schaumburg Convention Center. This was a rather bold move indeed, after being treated so very fairly for many years at the Pheasant Run Resort, but one we as a board felt necessary to ensure future growth of the show. Unfortunately our future growth comes at a price. In 2008 our show expenditures amounted to 80% of all revenue raised, leaving a 20% profit margin. In the business world this would be considered a very successful venture, especially in these economic times. But in order to achieve this profitability, costs ultimately were passed on to our vendors, registrants and various participants.

Considering most of the expenditures for putting on this type of show are fixed, the fragile nature of the trade show industry as a whole, general public consensus of a current failing



The Midwest Golf House provides the perfect facilities for the iTurfExpo.

economy, and a total uncertainty what the next golf season will bring, it is hard to imagine trying to reproduce this type of success in 2009. This is why the ITF Board of Directors has opted to forgo hosting the IPTC, at least for 2009, and play host to a totally new type of venture named the *I Turf Expo*.

Although the *I Turf Expo* is still in its infancy of planning stages, your ITF committee members are now feverishly ironing out the details for what type of fundraiser/educational tool this will become. At this point to describe it best would be to call it

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a Turfgrass Field Day/Trade Show on steroids. The *I Turf Expo* will take place on the grounds (and facilities) of the Midwest Golf House Complex, home of the Chicago District Golf Association (CDGA). The dates will be August 25 _ 26, 2009. Conceptually, some of the advantages the *I Turf Expo* will bring to our membership are:

- An opportunity to fully utilize the Midwest Golf House in a way it was is intended as a total turfgrass educational resource and research center.
- To create an atmosphere where you can come and see the latest products and equipment in action, not just brochures and parked equipment.
- To allow live vendor product and equipment demonstrations with no conflicting educational programming.
- Full access to turfgrass research field studies and turfgrass variety trials plus annuals, perennials and many other plant families.

- Registrant participation in equipment demonstrations.
- Specialized training for your staff including safety, irrigation and pruning.
- To offer additional educational opportunities, in the way of winter workshops, to each allied turfgrass association without being tied to a single event (IPTC).

This is certainly a change from our conventional way of doing business; however, we as a board believe this change will help us become more financially stable, keep our organizational goals intact and provide funding for turfgrass research and education to our membership.

Our barometer for success has been, and will always be, membership participation/satisfaction. So please mark your calendars and plan on attending this year's *I Turf Expo*, you will not be disappointed. Hope to see you all there. **-OC**



The ITurfExpo is best described as a turf field day on steroids. Attendees will see formal education, equipment demonstrations, product and research trials and much more.

