

# Off The Fringe

## Business briefs

### Chapters Unite to Form MiGCSA

There's a new chapter association in town. Sort of. Four golf course superintendent association chapters in Michigan have officially merged to form the Michigan Golf Course Superintendents Association (MiGCSA).

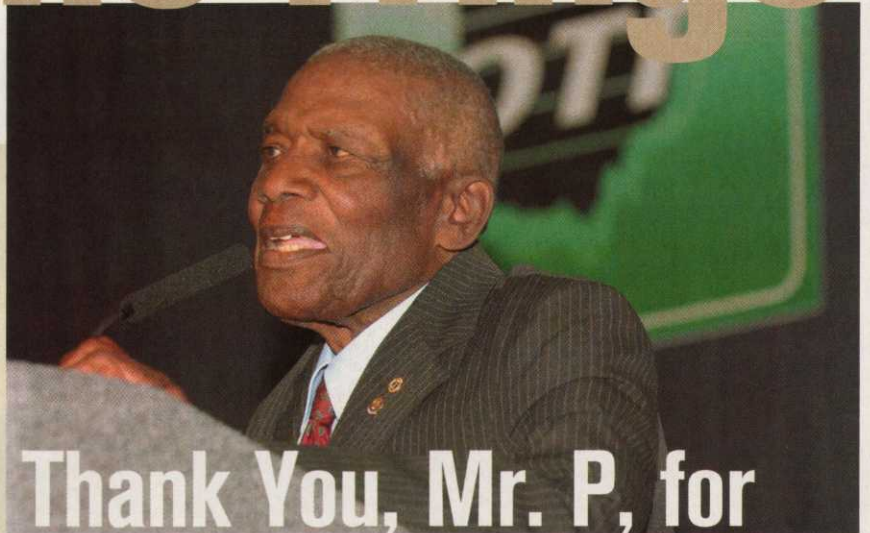
The new chapter will focus efforts on membership benefits, advocacy, environmental stewardship and providing services necessary to educate superintendents on the latest technological advances. The four chapters include the Northern Michigan Turf Managers Association, the Western Michigan GCSA, the Greater Detroit GCS and Mid Michigan TMA. The four associations had been discussing a possible merger for about six years. The talks escalated in the past 18 months and resulted in the formation of the MiGCSA Board of Directors, who completed the work necessary to put the merger up for a vote among the membership. Ninety percent of members approved the proposal.

"It was incredible to see the superintendents in Michigan vote overwhelmingly to become a unified force to better provide leadership on the economic, environmental and recreational vitality of golf in the state," said Ron Dahlin, certified superintendent of The Meadows Golf Club' at Grand Valley State University.

### Bayer, Nufarm Settle Dispute

Bayer CropScience LP and Nufarm Americas reached a settlement in a patent-infringement lawsuit over imidacloprid on fertilizer. Bayer brought legal action against Nufarm, which has acknowledged that Bayer's patent is "valid and enforceable," according to a Bayer press release. How-

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## Thank You, Mr. P, for the Role Model You Are

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

**P**eople say that racism continues to run rampant. There's no doubt that bigots still walk the cities and towns of America, but this country has come a long way since Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963. What occurred at the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation's (OTF) annual Conference & Show in December is proof. William Powell, a black man who was forced to build his own golf course because he was forbidden to play on white-only courses, received OTF's Professional of the Year Award.

Sixty years ago, the whites in Ohio's golf industry wanted nothing to do with Powell because of his color. But last month, the predominantly white Ohio golf industry honored the 91-year-old Powell with its top award for his accomplishments

in the golf course industry.

This isn't about giving whites a pat on the back for changing their views toward blacks, but I'd say we've all — whites and blacks — made tremendous strides since the racially turbulent 1940s, '50s and '60s. And we should thank people like King and Powell, who helped us see the light, for helping us get to this point.

Powell, "Mr. P" as they call him, was the first and is the only black person to design, build and operate a golf course in the United States — Clearview Golf Course in East Canton, Ohio. But a lot of folks would never have endured what Powell did to get it done.

Powell, who was captain of his high school golf team, fought in World War II. But upon returning home from the war, he had to fight discrimination. The area's golf courses — the ones he had played

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## Quotable

**"I'm in awe of what you folks do for a living. I don't think there's anything more beautiful than a well-manicured golf course or baseball field."**

— *Marty Brennaman, Cincinnati Reds radio announcer and keynote speaker at the 2007 Ohio Turfgrass Foundation's Conference and Show held in December.*

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while a member of his high school team — wouldn't let him tee it up because he was black.

But Powell didn't back down. "I'll just build my own course," he said. It wasn't easy to secure the funding, though, because white-owned banks refused to grant him a loan to buy a dairy farm that he wanted to convert to a golf course. The U.S. government also refused him a GI loan, even after he had just served in World War II.

Powell still didn't give in. Eventually, he teamed with two black doctors whom he was teaching golf to invest in the venture. Clearview's first nine holes opened in 1948.

Powell bought out his two partners in 1959 and added nine more holes in 1978. Clearview is on the Department of the Interior's

National Register of Historic Places.

OTF's award isn't the first time that Powell has received recognition from a very white industry for his accomplishments. It probably won't be the last.

But let's not just remember Powell as a black man who was able to hurdle the barriers of racism. Let's remember Powell as a man who displayed amazing perseverance in the face of an evil that still exists today. The man refused to give in.

At the beginning of his acceptance speech for OTF's award, Powell said the circumstance allowed him the opportunity to thank everyone "associated in golf" for his magnificent career.

Thank you, Mr. P., for the role model you are to the youths and adults of all colors and from all walks of life. ■

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