

# Kurth Gift Leads to a Third WDFG in Turfgrass

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club



It was quite a month for Terry Kurth. His oldest daughter gave birth to a baby boy — grandchild number one for Terry and his wife Kathy. Their other daughter became engaged. He scored his first hole-in-one. And he and Kathy provided \$150,000 to initiate another Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship in Turfgrass Management.

The Wisconsin Landscape Federation completed it with a \$100,000 gift. The \$250,000 is essentially matched by the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF), the University of Wisconsin Foundation (UWF), and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Graduate School. The \$500,000 is sufficient to support a graduate student on the investment earnings. The Terry and Kathleen Kurth Fellowship joins the Kusow Fellowship and the Newman Fellowship in support of turfgrass research in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the UW-Madison.

The hearings to ban phosphorus in Dane County inspired Terry to make a bold move. Frustrated by the politics of that issue and how decisions are made in spite of evidence to the contrary, he has added an Extension and communication aspect to this fellowship so there is broader distribution of turf research.

I have known Terry for a long time. I was a superintendent in Madison when he was an undergrad. About 25 years ago the WDNR called and asked me to serve on an interview committee to select a golf course superintendent for the only golf course the State of Wisconsin owned at that time - Peninsula State Park Golf Course in Door County. One of the applicants was a fairly recent UW - Madison turfgrass grad-



The setting for the Department of Horticulture garden party couldn't be more beautiful on a summer afternoon — the O.N. Allen Centennial Garden.



Horticulture Department Chairman Dennis Stimart served as Master of Ceremonies.



Lt. Governor Barbara Lawton introduced the Green Industry Survey.

uate; he won the job hands down. It was Terry Kurth.

While at Peninsula State Park he had a chance to join the ProTurf Division of O.M. Scott and Sons in Ohio, and he took the opportunity. His job was lecturer of the popular ProTurf Seminars that people my age remember so well. He was very good at it, but it involved a lot of travel. He and Kathy knew that extensive travel and a young family aren't always the best combination, so when a Barefoot Grass Lawn Care franchise for Madison was available, they bought it. The rest of their story is one of hard work, expanding business opportunities, and success.

The Kurths have a history is

sharing. From making up a shortfall for a faculty retirement party years ago to the most current gift of \$150,000, they step in when they see the need.

Terry's leadership in the turf industry is nearly legendary. He is the past president of the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association (WTA), the Grounds Maintenance Association of Wisconsin (GMAW), and the Wisconsin Landscape Federation (WLF). Nationally, he has presided over the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA), substantial testimony to the respect he has earned all across the country.

Close to home, when their church needed help for some building



**CALS Dean Elton Aberle spoke about the importance of the turfgrass industry in Wisconsin.**



**Namesakes and donors of the latest Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship in Turfgrass — Terry and Kathy Kurth.**

issues, the Kurths were first in line. Same thing for their school district and the need for athletic facilities. They have been prosperous and have shared that prosperity.

The thing I like is that they really are a team. For the first three years of Barefoot Grass, they operated out of their Pine Bluff home, with Kathy serving as mom, bookkeeper and secretary. At the Seybold Road site, where we would occasionally meet as a WTA board over pizza, Kathy was usually there, sometimes with one or two of the four kids. She's been Terry's partner all the way.

So when he called with his plan for a WDFG, despite my elation, I wasn't surprised. It is completely in character for Terry Kurth.

The WLF is to be applauded, too, for recognizing how helpful their participation would be. Brian Swingle has been a very positive force for the federation.

The Department of Horticulture for the past ten years or so has hosted a garden party at the O.N. Allen Centennial Garden on campus for friends of the department. It was especially eventful this year since it was chosen for the public release of the Green Industry Survey, headed by the WLF and supported by the WGCSA. And it was the venue for announcement of the Kurth Fellowship.

What a grand way to spend a summer afternoon in Wisconsin! 🌿



**The garden party audience listened closely to the talk about turf and Wisconsin Green Industry Survey. Bob Battaglia, State Statistician who handled the survey, is seated front left of the photo.**



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