

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT'S DESK

We Need to Take the Lead For the MTGF to Succeed



A small group of leaders had a vision. This vision was to establish a foundation that brought together a wide group of professionals sharing a common interest in the green industry. They felt great things could come out of this group; thus the Minnesota Turf & Grounds Foundation was formed.

The MTGF would have an annual conference and show that could grow to 5000 attendees. All these common groups would attend and hold their annual meetings and elections. There would be a large trade show that would be the envy of all. The MTGF would fund research and scholarships. They would lobby the legislators regarding new laws that affect our industry. We would have an Executive Director represent us at fundraising events and with the U of M, take the lead in establishing a new Turfgrass Research Center in Empire Township and help to bring the U of M's turfgrass program to national prominence. Everyone in the industry would want to be part of this great organization.

Now it is time to see how the vision is working. The MGCSA took the lead and donated seed money to establish the MTGF. Our Annual Conference and Show was moved to the Minneapolis Convention Center. A large trade show was born and many concurrent educational sessions were made available. Everything seemed to be going well; attendance from the other industry partners was poor "but they will be online soon" we were told.

The Board of Governors of the MGCSA voted to abandon its Annual Conference and Show, and turn it over to the MTGF. It was always a part of the grand plan. Everyone was going to combine their conventions with the MTGF's, with the exception of one group (the MNLA which is no longer part of the MTGF). A couple of years have passed and attendance has not been growing at the rate we anticipated. A group of leaders which represented each faction of the green industry met to plan the next big show. Lack of interest and enthusiasm was apparent in some of the parties involved. "Too much turf," one leader said. "The trade show should be free of charge," stated another. I asked each group when they were going to combine their conference with the MTGF and thus not compete? Most groups said never. Explanations were given, that they funded their programs with their own conferences and had a tradition they didn't want to relinquish. It seemed apparent to me the MGCSA conferences, which date back to 1926, were not looked to with the same esteem which we have for our proud tradition. They seemed insulted that I would hold such an opinion.

Here we stand today. The MGCSA makes up about 60% of the attendance. The MNLA (which no longer belongs) made up 15% and the rest of the partners made up the balance. We were led to believe 5,000 people would be attending. In reality, the attendance reaches approximately 1,000 people. Our educational opportunities have also diminished, but income is up, realizing approximately \$60,000 per year.

So my questions are:

- 1) What is the MTGF doing with the money?
- 2) Where are the research and scholarship programs headed? I was at one meeting and three MGCSA members were present with no other faction represented. It was decided we could fund very little without full participation.
- 3) How are the students going to get from St. Paul to Empire Township?
- 4) Is the U of M going to abandon all programs if we don't jointly participate in the Big Show?

5) Who are the future leaders?

I have always been of the mind that if you believe there are problems, you should be looking for solutions.

I believe we have three options:

1) Have the MTGF share the profits of the Annual Conference and Show. The MTGF would keep 50% and distribute the remainder to participants not holding conflicting annual meetings, based on their percentage of representation. (This is an old idea that died from lack of a second to the motion by our board.) This would give everyone needed money to fund their organizations, and over time the MTGF would also have more money, by way of more participation.

2) *Re-establish* our annual conference. Great education and small bull sessions. We would be following the lead of the other organizations in the MTGF.

3) Have our membership get more involved to make the MTGF realize its potential. This is the best of the three.

I do not believe we should split from the MTGF. However, the MTGF Board of Governors has some important decisions to make in a short time. I look to their leadership to come forward with answers prior to the MGCSA Annual Meeting.

Please volunteer your time and talents to make it the best educational opportunity for all of us! We need to take the lead for the MTGF to succeed.

— Jim Nicol, CGCSA
MGCSA President

**Plan to Attend
The MTGF
Conference &
Trade Show
Dec. 9, 10, 11
At The
Minneapolis
Convention Center**