

When it comes to the Oakland Turfgrass Education Initiative JUST ASK GARY...

People often wonder what is OTEI? Actually, it stands proudly for the Oakland Turfgrass Education Initiative home-based from Metropolitan Golf Links located in Oakland, CA. Below you will find an insightful Q&A with two GCSANC members who are deeply involved with this community outreach program, Gary Carls, CGCS, (City of Sunnyvale Golf Course Division) and Gary Ingram, CGCS, (Metropolitan Golf Links). It's through their dedicated work and with the support of CourseCo, Inc. (a progressive golf course management company) and other loyal supporters that they are able to introduce youth to the turf & landscape industry and also to the game of golf.

How did you get involved with OTEI?

Gary Carls: In 2001, I was asked by Ray Davies, CGCS, to be part of the OTEI planning group as a representative of the GCSANC. At that time OTEI was helping develop curriculum for courses at Castlemont High School in Oakland. Shortly thereafter, we started developing a two-year Sports Turf Management program at Merritt College.

Gary Ingram: When interviewing for the position at Metropolitan GL, I was informed about a new “community outreach program” for youth and was told I’d have a chance to be actively involved with the initiative and help fuel its success. I liked that idea! At the time I was planning to begin a career in teaching, so OTEI was a wonderful opportunity to combine my passion for golf course maintenance with my desire to teach.

How many years have you been involved?

Gary Ingram: The day I commenced employment at Metropolitan Golf Links was the day I became involved with OTEI. It’s been seven great years!

Gary Carls: 8 years. When OTEI gained its non-profit status in 2006, I was asked to serve as President/CEO, and I gladly accepted.

As a member of the OTEI board of directors, what does it entail?

Gary Ingram: We focus on the future direction of OTEI... everything from funding to individual program development and implementation.

What are your responsibilities when serving as president of OTEI?

Gary Carls: Besides serving as chair for OTEI’s board of directors, I also have oversight for the day-to-day operations. I continue to seek partnership opportunities where we can work with other organizations (like the newly-founded, The First Tee of Oakland) in an effort to reach even more kids within the community. Last fall we were able to hire a person (on a part-time basis) who assists with reports, website and newsletter, plus coordinating transportation & meals for our study tours, etc.

Many OTEI activities are based from Metropolitan Golf Links. How do you manage it all?

Gary Ingram: CourseCo (my employer) has been very supportive of OTEI evidenced by the deep involvement that our facility has had with the program since its inception. Doing what is right for the

environment, the industry, and the community is what CourseCo is all about. I also have a very supportive family who understands that OTEI is one of my life passions. Our maintenance staff at Metro continues to be involved, and they too, are extremely helpful and understanding. When handling OTEI responsibilities along with my regular duties at Metro, the old saying prevails: If there is a will there is a way!

What other GCSANC members have been involved with OTEI?

Gary Carls: Ray Davies, CGCS, has been involved since the start and was instrumental in getting OTEI going. He continues to serve on our board of directors. Numerous other GCSANC members have provided support throughout the years, some serving as guest speakers at various activities. Others have helped us through donations to our annual charity golf tournament and/or by participating in the event.



Gary Ingram, CGCS, explains to OTEI students the importance of safety when operating equipment on the course.

Gary Ingram: Gosh, there have been so many folks who’ve helped us over the years. Some that come to mind are Ray Davies, CGCS, Terry Grasso, CGCS, Cord Ozment, CGCS, Dave Davies, CGCS, Alan Andreasen, CGCS, Rodney Muller plus Pat Gross and Dr. Ali Harivandi. I know there are others (whose names I may have forgotten), that have given generously of their time and service, and to all of them, we are very appreciative.

Biggest challenges with a non-profit such as OTEI?

Gary Carls: The biggest challenge has been to “keep everything going” with an organization that is primarily volunteer-based. Now that we have a staff person it has helped ease some of the responsibilities, yet nearly all of the study tours still require a lot of time from our volunteers. We’re always in search of superintendents who can assist with the study tours. When it comes to securing funds for worthy programs, we, like others, are faced by the challenges that come with today’s tough economic climate.

Gary Ingram: Committed volunteers to participate in the every-
(Continued on page 10)

JUST ASK GARY...

(Continued from page 9)

day working of the organization. And of course, funding.

Biggest rewards for being involved?

Gary Carls: The biggest reward for me is seeing the smiles on the kids' faces every time we have a study tour. It's also great to see the support we receive from the players at Metropolitan Golf Links who are always asking about the kids and the work we are doing with them. They too, often walk away with a smile on their face.

Gary Ingram: I find it rewarding to know that we can make a positive impact in a young person's life. I am confident to say, that students involved in our program will not be a detriment to their community, but rather a benefit. I've seen the kids take what they've learned and use it to help find solutions within the local community, which is important during these ever-changing times. Additionally, I appreciate the one-on-one conversations I have with the students, as they always seem to put things into perspective for me.

What is your favorite OTEI project or learning experience? And why?

Gary Carls: Although the study tours we conduct are always enjoyable, I'd have to say the trips to the Golf Industry Show (GIS) are always the most memorable for me. It's great to take a few kids to the GIS since it is out of their local area and we make sure they experience the whole event. While we keep them focused on education and the trade show for the first few days, we always try to incorporate a fun element towards the end, where they spend a day at Disney, Sea World or somewhere similar.

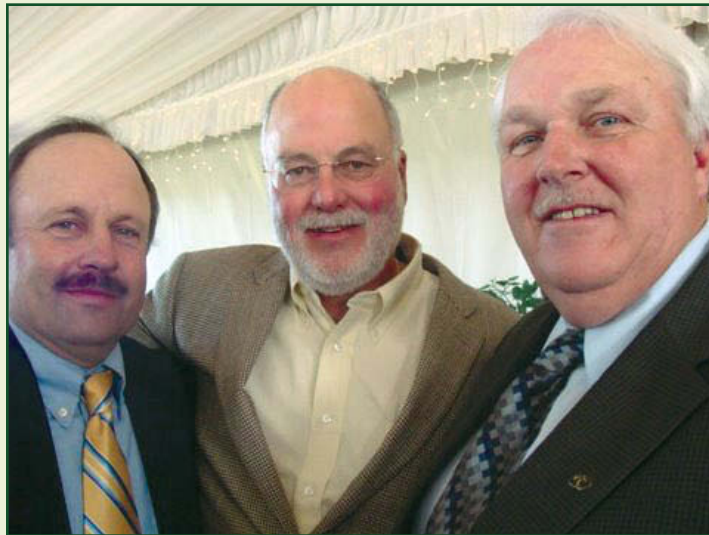
Gary Ingram: I really don't have a favorite outing, as each learning experience has its positive, rewarding, (and challenging moments) too. The events on-site at Metro often give the students a chance to not only learn about the environment but to experience it. (On a lighter side, just the ability to watch the kids be themselves or even play with our dog Kendra, is fun to observe, too).

Have any of the students sought employment or further education in turf care or related fields?

Gary Ingram: Most of Metro's Guest Service staff have been involved with OTEI as either interns or participants in study tours. This summer, a former high school intern has been hired to serve on our maintenance staff/team. We will have four high school interns at Metro this year. Some of our older OTEI students are now in their

second year of college. A couple have joined our men's club and indicated a desire to pursue a career within the turf care industry or a related field.

OTEI is a community outreach program for Oakland's inner-city youth. This initiative offers middle school and high school students the opportunity to explore the turf and landscape industry and the game of golf through: field trips, classroom guest speakers, internships, industry conferences, after-school programs, scholarships, career and job fairs, golf outings, special community projects, agricultural chemistry and plant biology courses, and turf seminars for high school and college level students.



A trio of supporters: OTEI Board Member **Gary Ingram**, CGCS with **Tom Isaak**, President of CourseCo, Inc. and OTEI President **Gary Carls**, CGCS.

Additionally, the OTEI encourages students to investigate career paths through higher education programs offered through the Peralta Community College District, including Merritt College's Professional Turf and Landscape Management Program. To learn more about OTEI visit www.oaklandturf.org.



GROWTH PRODUCTS
The Liquid Solutions Company
Liquid Fertilizers, Micronutrients & Natural Organics

Keith Giertych
Technical Sales Representative

Cell: 408-687-3225
Office / Fax: 408-227-8623
kgiertych@growthproducts.com
www.GrowthProducts.com



Floratine
Products Group

Creative Solutions
For Turf

Farmload Distributors (800) 322-8417

Your Exclusive Northern California Dealers

Bob Francischine 209-747-2206	Mike Farmen 559-709-6295	Thor Larson 831-277-4356
Bob Slater 530-219-4135		Pete Fredeen 209-401-4868