

Firm helps peers set 'benchmarks'

ALCA members Karen Corcoran and David Luse are taking a "peer group" approach to professionalism. They're partners in "The Benchmark Group," a firm designed to provide growth and profitability with executives in the design and landscape contract services industry. Corcoran is a former vice president with Rentokil Environmental Services. Luse is chief executive officer of Arteka Corporation, Minneapolis.

A key part of The Benchmark Group service is the "CEO Forum," a two-day re-

treat to give fellow entrepreneurs an opportunity to explore specific current business issues.

"The CEO Forum allows eight to 10 entrepreneurs to get together and help each other establish standards of excellence for each others' businesses, both financially and on management issues," explains Corcoran.

Issues are selected by the group prior to each Forum and include topics such as 'open book' management, employee development and marketing sophistication.

"We were looking at linking similar-sized businesses in different geographic locations so that there's not a conflict of interest," says Corcoran.

"The key was to select Forum members who have similar interests, and are not competitive, and keep that information confidential, whether it's a financial or a management issue.

"We're working through owners, to come up with a game plan and the goals and objectives to make it happen."

Corcoran adds that many entrepreneurs are "out on their own," when faced with the challenges of business, and that's where The Benchmark Group comes in.

"A larger business would have a corporate environment, but a medium-sized company doesn't have those resources."

"CEOs or presidents of com-

panies of any size know it's lonely and cold on top," suggests Luse, "and the dynamics of that make it difficult to really have peers they can get together and benchmark with. We're bringing those folks together."

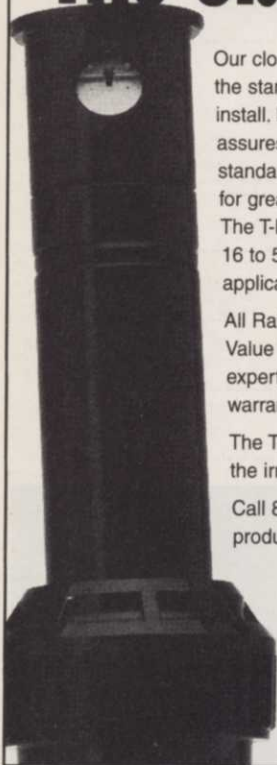
Luse recently hosted a Forum in his home city of Minneapolis, and a tour of the Toro headquarters was included.

Forums are held in member home cities, "to become more in tune with the marketplace that person is in," explains Corcoran.

"The way you market in Atlanta, with the growth and diversity of that culture, is much different, for example, than the market in New York or New Jersey."

To learn more about The Benchmark Group, contact Karen Corcoran at (201) 543-0552; fax: (201) 543-5995. □

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MD/DC/VA show a hit

The Landscape Contractors Association of MD/DC/VA reported success for its winter workshop. More than 450 attended.

"This is a terrific opportunity for landscape professionals to get the information they need to stay competitive, said Sherri Mara, director of administration for the Association.

The LCA of MD/DC/VA is headquartered at 15245 Shady Grove Rd., Suite 130, Rockville, MD 20850. □

PLCAA wants resumés

The Professional Lawn Care Association of America is accepting resumés from qualified association management professionals as it seeks to replace outgoing director, Ann McClure.

Forward resumés by April 15 to: Larry Messina, Lawn Cure of Southern Indiana, Inc., P.O. Box 1295, 1611 Spring St., Jeffersonville, IN 47131. □