

## &gt; HOT TOPICS

# 'Career Days' hits big numbers in Texas

**DALLAS**— Some students climbed trees. Others covered a parking lot with an irrigation grid. A few dozen tried their best to identify weeds and turf, while some made sales presentations to the pros.

It was all part of The Associated Landscape Contractors of America's 21st Annual Student Career Days competition, held at Richland College March 20-23.

A reported 550 students from 39 schools came in for the event, which each year tests the landscape and horticulture smarts of students enrolled in two- or four-year colleges across the country.

"This is definitely going to go down as one of the best Student Career Days we have ever had," said Career Days Chairman, Drew St. John, II, CLP, of St. John and

to a strong economy, a good central location and an enhanced awareness of ALCA and its curriculum programs across the country.

Students competed in 20 events that tested school teams on skills and ability to implement sound landscaping practices and principles, including design, sales skills and plant identification.

### A look at the 'real world'

Mike McPherson of the Oregon Landscape Contractors Association helped judge the irrigation installation event.

"This gives you a chance to see how technical it can be," said McPherson. "It gives the students a good idea of what they're up against."

"Most of [the irrigation contestants] have a lot to learn. But that's what we expected," said another judge. "You can tell the people who have worked in the field from the ones who have had only book learning."

Mike Seneff, president of Plant Interscapes, attended the Sales Presentation competition, in which students were expected to "sell" a contract to a client, played by an industry professional.

"Most of the students took the presentations very seriously in terms

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National Guard trucks driving across people's lawns; front-end loaders; and sand bag debris," said Snortum, whose business was not flooded.

"We normally begin to install landscapes about the second week in April. Right now we don't have a cash flow due to the blizzard and flooding. The one advantage to all this is that we have a great opportunity to get our garden store organized and the plants potted."

## PLCAA director job a hot item

**Jeffersonville, Ind.**—Lots of people want to be executive director of PLCAA, headquartered in Marietta, Ga. Within several weeks of advertising for a new executive director, the PLCAA search committee had received 178 responses.

"Frankly, I was surprised at the number," says Larry Messina, chairman of the search committee and PLCAA president-elect. Messina says the committee is narrowing its list of candidates, and hopes to present its recommendations at the PLCAA board meeting May 16-17.

The search committee advertised the opening in the *Washington Post*, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and *Chicago Tribune* newspapers in addition to several trade magazines directed at association officers.

"We have some excellent people who have applied for the position. We feel confident that when we get down to our final decision we will have a very, very qualified person," says Messina.

Ann McClure, who had served as PLCAA executive director for six years, left the job in April to manage the International Gas Turbine Institute.

## Green industry publisher dies at 76

**CLEVELAND**— James A. Nelson, who began *Weeds Trees & Turf* magazine—which was later renamed *LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT*—died April 16 in a nursing facility in Lakewood, Ohio. Cause of death was a brain tumor.

Nelson began *Weeds Trees & Turf* and *Pest Control* magazines as part of his Trade Magazines, Inc. company, which also published books. Both magazines are now published by Advanstar Communications, headquartered in Cleveland.

[CLIPPINGS]



Ron, left, and Chris Kujawa of Kujawa Enterprises, were looking to hire 'just one good person' at Career Days. There were plenty of candidates to choose from.

Associates, Hattiesburg, Miss.

"We keep exceeding our expectations and goals. We had a 35 percent increase in participation over last year," reported St. John, who attributed the Career Days success



Student Career Days contestants competed in 20 events, including a wood construction competition on an outdoor stage.

of their attire and politeness, and they seemed pretty well-prepared with the numbers," said Seneff.

"Those that seemed to do better were the ones who identified with the customer's needs and really gave the feeling that they were a partner with the customer."



Landscape/horticulture students met with prospective employers during ALCA Student Career Days.

Alexander Warren, horticulture instructor at Northwest College, Houston, said Career Days helps teachers learn what employers want from employees.

"What do we, as instructors, need to know to put people into the industry? That's what we have to be concerned about," said Warren.

Cal Poly San Luis Obispo took first place in the overall standings; Virginia Tech came in second; Colorado State University was third.

**Interviews with companies**

Prior to the competition, students looking for work in the green industry met with company representatives in a trade show setting.

Seventy-six landscape companies and industry suppliers donated time, money and materials to the four-day event.

During welcoming remarks, Chris Kujawa, KEI Enterprises, Inc., Kudahy, Wisc., announced the formation of the ALCA Educational Foundation, Inc.

"It's a 100 percent scholarship granting organization," explained Kujawa. "We've got more than \$100,000 in the bank, we've got some major donors, and some 5000-plus anonymous donors lining up left and right. The Toro Corporation has sponsored our first \$1000 scholarship, with a donation of \$10,000."

Kujawa said the increased amount in scholarship funding will enable ALCA to award larger grants to individual students.

—Terry McIver

**'Ambassadors' tell turf story**

The GCSAA/PLCAA/RISE "Ambassador" speakers program is in full swing, and as of April, 23 presentations on the benefits of turfgrass had been made to students and civic groups.

Jon Cundiff, president of Turfs Up Lawn Service, Lee's Summit, Mo., made a presentation recently to 2nd graders at Pleasant Lea Elementary School.

"We covered insects that were problems in our industry; the benefits of turf; why it's important to maintain turf; and why it's important to keep trees and shrubs healthy," said Cundiff.

**Relate to audience**

Tom Gray, CGCS, Franklin Hills Country Club, Bloomfield Hills, Mich., has used slide presentations during his talks to Lions and Rotary Clubs.

"I start with a slide of Augusta National. That grades the industry, because everybody tries to compete with Augusta," said Gray.

Gray gets questions on spikeless golf shoes, to moles, to fertilizer timing.

None of the audience members have expressed any hostility to chemicals. In fact, Gray said, he's had to emphasize to some overzealous diazinon users the need to use chemicals properly.

Steve Neuliep, superintendent at The Dunes Club, New Buffalo, Mich., has made presentations to club management and the Merrillville, Ind., Rotary Club.

"Things work out much better when you 'bring it home,' and use analogies your audience is familiar with," said Neuliep.

"You can sit up there and spout out scientific facts, but if you don't use analogies, and things people are familiar with, you leave them flabbergasted with data."

The "Ambassador" program is led by Deb Rudin of the D.A. Rudin Co., Peoria, Ill. and program manager Elizabeth Lawder of RISE, Washington, D.C.

—Terry McIver