

Lawn care needs a flow of workers for growth



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Chemical lawn care is now more than 30 years old. It's a relatively young industry, and still developing. But, it's also maturing, certainly beyond the point where it tries to hire people for part-time work. Or as their second job. Or as a temporary place of employment between the last job and the next.

The chemical lawn care industry has arrived at a time when it must look, not just for employees to do today's work, but for a *flow* of employees to do tomorrow's work. It must look at creating

an on-going stream of potential employees to meet challenges that are sure to arise for each and every one of our businesses. And not just next season, but long range.

Individual companies can't do this. With consolidation of the lawn care industry, there is really no pool of major companies out there that could drive such an endeavor. No. This effort must come from groups within the industry. It must come from trade associations,

either at the national, state or regional levels. Or, perhaps, by some collaborative effort among these groups.

Each year the Indiana State Lawn Care Association holds a Winter Workshop. Its purpose is member education. Because of continued strong member support, the Association has been able to raise a considerable amount of money which is re-invested in education.

This year the investment is going to Vincennes University in southwestern Indiana. Headed by Professor James Messmer, the university's Horticultural Department has offered an excellent two-year Associate Degree program for those interested in a career in turfgrass management. This program has turned out a steady stream of excellent candidates who will someday fill management

and/or owner positions in our industry.

At Messmer's suggestion, the Indiana State Lawn Care Association will take this program one step further. With the assistance of Vincennes University's excellent Audio Visual Department, the Association will develop a recruitment video to be used by vocational education departments in every high school in the state.

This 15-minute video will be available to any student in search of a long-term opportunity. It will focus on the importance of turfgrass in our society, how it has become a viable industry in and of itself, the many employment possibilities it offers, and the potential for personal as well as professional growth.

This video will not treat the industry with a sugar coating. It will address the physical nature of the work, weather issues, and the concerns that students may have about working with chemical products.

The Association looks at the video as another step in solidifying and building the chemical lawn care industry. It's another way of saying that we in the industry are offering opportunities to young people, and not just a "temporary stop along the way". **LM**

Only the lawn care associations--national, state or regional--can solve the industry's labor woes.