

# Career Days a big hit

*Go-go economy gives green industry students lots of choices at record-breaking event in Raleigh, NC*

By RON HALL/ Managing Editor

**H**ere's a plug for the 23rd Annual ALCA Career Days. It's already set for next March. That's right, March 18-21, 1999, in Lexington, KY.

If your landscape company needs bright, enthusiastic young people, plan to attend. You may even want to help out. ALCA is always looking for volunteers and sponsors for Career Days.

The event's purpose is simple. Landscape companies come looking for employees. Not laborers but young people with the ability and desire to be crew leaders, designers, potential managers, young people looking to make landscaping their careers.

Students come to Career Days to compete (see sidebar) but mostly seeking opportunity.

That's exactly what hap-



**Mike Cooper sponsored irrigation.**



**John Gachina seeks quality interns.**



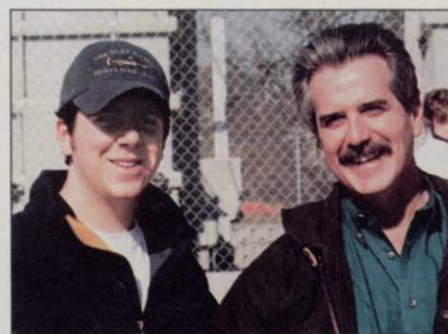
**Dean Snodgrass interviewed hopefuls.**

pened again in March in Raleigh, NC. About 600 students from across the United States got an opportunity to meet with 300 landscape professionals, representing just over 100 companies. The first day gave the students the opportu-

John Gachina, CLT, CCLP, of Gachina Landscape Management, Menlo Park, CA. "My company continues to grow and we have to keep getting good people. That's not so easy to do. We're all competing for these good employees."



**Two-person teams from across the U.S. competed in deck building.**



**Michael Currin, right, Greenscape, Holly Springs, NC, and son Daniel at Career Days.**

nity to visit, and set up interviews, at the 90 booths set up by landscape companies in the Raleigh Convention Center. The second day they displayed their landscaping skills at a variety of competitive events at nearby North Carolina State University.

"I'm looking for some young people that have the potential to move into management," said

Gachina, a contractor for 24 years and the owner of his own landscape company the past 10, attended his third Career Days. He helped oversee and judge the irrigation competition.

"You have to keep with this program," Gachina added. "You can't

just show up once, and recruit. You have to build your program, and hopefully the young person you hire has a good experience and the word gets out to other students."

Tom Pruett, president of LanArc, a landscape company located in Raleigh, said he was looking for a designer/sales person. "If we could get the right person, it would free up some

of my time. I think it would take our company to next level."

Dean Snodgrass flew from Portland, OR, with an eye to hiring production people with the ability to be crew leaders for Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping. "Hopefully, we can find some young people who can move up to foremen pretty quickly. We had three good interviews, and took some résumés," he said.

Michael Currin, president of Greenscape, Holly Springs, NC, said his company needs "lead people and design people." He also hoped to attract summer interns to his growing company.

A number of the companies at the annual Career Days offered internship programs to attract young talent. These programs provide young people with valuable industry experience and training. It also gives both the companies and interns that they hire a couple of months to assess each other.

Bland Landscaping, Inc., Apex, NC, for instance, adver-



Lebo Newman, center, Redwood Landscaping, Santa Rosa, CA, talks about career opportunities with Janet Burk, Richland College, Dallas.

tised that it takes two or three interns at a time.

"Students will have a department manager assigned to them throughout their internship. The manager will be responsible for overseeing the student's progress and development within each department," said literature from Bland Landscaping. "Each student will have the opportunity to sample a department for a period of no more than a month." Departments include: commercial maintenance, floriculture, commercial installation, resi-

dential maintenance among others.

John Gachina's company offered a similarly rewarding program, promising to give students "a real taste of what it means to be involved in an award-winning company."

This year's Career Days, with unemployment so low and landscaping companies hungry for young talent, must have seemed like a smorgasbord of opportunity for participating students. □



Michigan State's Bob Barkham did well in irrigation event.



Jack Hollerich, left, and Tony Cantelmo from Columbus State (Ohio) had a plan and followed it in building this small patio.

## Californians take top honors

Dave Bakke, a student at Cal Poly-Pomona, was the Number 1 Superstar at Career Days after all the competition had been completed. Jason Green, Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo, was second and Jeremy Parker, Virginia Tech, third.

Cal Poly, San Luis-Obispo took team honors earning the Robert Callaway Trophy, followed by Cal Poly-Pomona and Colorado State University.

Students from these schools competed too: Auburn, Brigham Young, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College (CC), Clackamas CC, Columbus State CC, Cornell, Cuyahoga CC, Dakota Technical, Hinds CC, Illinois Central.

Joliet Junior College, Louisiana State, Meridian CC, Michigan State, Milwaukee Area Technical, Mississippi State, North Carolina State, North Metro Tech, Ohio State, ATI, Oklahoma State, Oklahoma State-OKC, Oregon State, Penn State, Richland College, Sandhills CC.

Shasta CC, Southeast Technical, Spokane CC, SUNY Cobleskill, SUNY Delhi, Tennessee Tech, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Tennessee, Virginia Tech, Western Texas. □