

Green Industry pros must go to high schools to inform young people of potentially rewarding careers.



## Needed: trained shop techs

**D**emand for skilled turf equipment technicians and maintenance shop managers increases daily. The Green Industry offers these trained personnel a range of exciting career opportunities. Too bad that few young people recognize this.

### Working to meet a need

Lake City Community College is trying to change this. It has a long history of training professionals for the Green Industry. Its two-year Golf Course Operations and Landscape Technology programs began in 1967. LCCC's Turf Equipment Management program (TEM) started in 1973, and Irrigation Management began in 1999. These are one-year programs.

TEM was started to meet calls from the golf industry for mechanics trained in maintenance and repair on specific turf equipment. In recent years, the landscape industry has also been seeking more of these potentially valuable team members.

The Lake City program started small and developed slowly, and demand for these students wasn't that great, at least not until the mid-1980s. But that changed when golf's popularity as a televised spectator sport exploded. The public saw immaculately groomed courses on TV and pressured their superintendents for similar conditions. The superintendents, in turn, asked equipment manufacturers for help, and they responded by producing more sophisticated and technically complex machines.

Seemingly overnight, the golf industry began screaming for skilled equipment technicians capable of interpreting equipment manuals, establishing PM pro-

grams, setting up parts rooms, ordering parts properly, grinding and setting reel mowers, managing parts inventory, operating computers and keeping accurate records. Now the landscape industry needs them, too.

Today, graduates of LCCC's TEM program are in high demand. The 15 or 18 students completing the course each year receive several different job offers. Starting salaries range from \$22,000 to \$40,000.

It would seem that recruiting students to a one-year program that can place just about every graduate in a good job would be easy. It's not. Few people recognize it as a profession. Think about it: How many students are counseled into turf equipment mechanics?

### Let's do something

Let's go to high schools to inform young people about this and other potentially rewarding careers in the Green Industry. High school automotive mechanics students are logical recruits, but don't overlook young people considering college. Many of them have no idea what major to pursue. Too often they overlook lucrative careers available through programs like ours.

We must talk to the student groups and invite them, their instructors and their counselors to our facilities so they can see a modern shop loaded with today's sophisticated turf equipment.

The landscape industry needs dedicated and trained young people, and nowhere is this need greater than in its maintenance shops. Who's going to keep our sophisticated turf equipment maintained and repaired?

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