

LAWNCAREPRO

LM'S OPERATOR OF THE MONTH » BY RON HALL



Dean Moore started in the lawn care business with rented hedge clippers, a motorcycle and an understanding that quality work and honest, personalized service would lead to success. What he didn't count on were two devastating floods in his part of Iowa.

Your market in and around Cedar Rapids and Iowa City suffered incredible flooding in June 2008. Tell us about it.

Our area flooded in '93, so we had some experience in operating from temporary headquarters. As the waters rose last year and flooded low-lying areas, city officials kept us updated with flood crest predictions, which led us to move to higher ground four days before the waters reached our shop and offices.

A lot of credit goes to our terrific staff. We didn't miss a single day of operations because of flooding. We rented a couple of empty warehouses and put our office staff in two hotel rooms and operated like that from the middle of June until the end of October.

The flood impacted our clients in different ways. We didn't lose many clients as a percentage of our business because of flooding. At a few locations we changed our maintenance service to clean up and replanting.

Quality Care is recognized for its community service efforts. Tell us about that. Our longest association has been with our

local Goodwill Industries. We were introduced to the concept of supported employment in 1985 and hired a young man who's now the longest tenured employee on our staff. Over the years, the supported employment concept has expanded to include students with learning disabilities or coming from disadvantaged situations. We strive to have 10% of our staff comprised of folks who have come through supported employment, which is usually Goodwill Industries. They make a significant contribution to our business, and are loyal and grateful for the opportunity. Goodwill recognized us as their "Employer of the Year" in 1998, which was very meaningful to me.

Your company's marketing material emphasizes the training your employees receive. Share your training strategy. All of our operations staff leaders came up through the

ranks, beginning as lawn or landscape maintenance staff. So the people managing the work have done the work themselves. We also have a training handbook for each area of service. We hold weekly staff meetings in each division to reinforce training and expectations and to discuss topics of importance specific to the time of year. For example, emerald ash borer has been identified across the river from northeast Iowa, and we're preparing for it.

What do you see as the biggest opportunity for Green Industry contractors during the next decade? I see two. The first is for Green Industry businesses to distinguish themselves by providing the highest level of customer service. The people who hire us want their properties to look great and their service providers to respond immediately and completely to their needs. Beyond that, the

AT A GLANCE

COMPANY: Quality Care, The Nature Care Company, Coralville, IA

FOUNDED: 1980

PRINCIPAL: Dean Moore, President

NUMBER OF LOCATIONS: 1

EMPLOYEES: 107

SERVICES OFFERED: lawn care, tree and shrub care, landscape maintenance

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: PLCAA/PLANET member since 1980, Iowa Professional Lawn Care Association

WEB SITE: www.quality-care.com

best service companies will identify and preemptively correct potential problems before they become bigger.

The second opportunity is to offer the "greenest" service possible. The business that best promotes itself as environmentally conscious, and correctly identifies the ways in which its business practices enhance the environment, will be the company with which clients want to work. We all need to be examining the ways we make an impact on our natural world.

WE STRIVE TO HAVE 10% OF OUR STAFF COMPRISED OF FOLKS WHO HAVE COME THROUGH SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT, WHICH IS USUALLY GOODWILL INDUSTRIES."