

Forum prompts peer, supplier networking

BY SARAH PFLEDDERER ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Bill Leuenberger may have best summed up the takeaway of the *Landscape Management 2013 Lawn Care Forum* when he said, "It's amazing, when you talk to your peers, the things you can find out about."

Leuenberger, soil and turf management department manager at Chalet in North Chicago, Ill., was one of 34 lawn care professionals who gathered at Reunion Resort in Orlando, Fla., Nov. 13-15 for the conference.

The event kicked off with an informal welcome reception. Other networking opportunities continued with golfing, ziplining and an ATV tour.

Next, attendees engaged with forum sponsors in one-on-one supplier meetings—with Dow AgroSciences, FMC Professional Solutions, Holganix, John Deere Landscapes, PermaGreen Supreme and Quali-Pro.

Education sessions also were held and hosted by guest speakers:

- ▶ Shaun Canary, director of marketing for Weed Pro in Sheffield Village, Ohio, who presented "3 Tips for Dominating Online Marketing;"
- ▶ Ron Edmonds, of The Pincipium Group in Cordova, Tenn., who offered "What You Should Do Now to Plan Your Exit;" and
- ▶ Karen Reardon, vice president of public affairs for RISE in Washington, D.C., who gave a grassroots briefing.

Anthony Williams, CGS, CGM, director of ground for Stone Mountain Golf Club by Marriott in Stone Mountain, Ga., delivered the event's keynote speech. He discussed setting and achieving Green Industry goals, referencing personal



accomplishments for sustainability programs he put in place for golf courses and hotels.

Add-on services panel

With lawn care professionals from nearly every region in the U.S., as well as Canada, the forum came full circle when a three-person panel spoke on the topic of add-on services in their lawn care companies, sharing differing business techniques to put specialty services in place.

Gary LaScalea, owner of GroGreen in Plano, Texas, disclosed details about pest control services—he calls his six-year-old add-on a "pest preventive program."

"It's a lot of that work that lawn care technicians are able to do at the same time as doing regular tree and shrub treatment at the house," LaScalea said, and added GroGreen treats the outside perimeter of houses around the foundation with broad-spectrum insecticides via quarterly applications.

Leuenberger talked about Chalet's specialty application program for removing bentgrass from bluegrass lawns, which it calls its Tenacity program. Since beginning the program two years ago, Chalet has added the service to 100 accounts.

"It's pretty labor intensive," he said.



The *Landscape Management 2013 Lawn Care Forum* was held Nov. 13-15 at Reunion Resort in Orlando, Fla.

Chalet applies three applications of Tenacity within a six-

week period and also slit seeds the lawns.

Rob Palmer, CEO of Weed Pro, gave a by-the-numbers explanation of his company's success with its add-on services.

From July to August, it sold about \$372,000 in special jobs through customer request or "nurturing campaigns," whereby technicians notify customers about concerns with their property then the sales team follows up with an email about a service to fix it.

For example, the company sold 2,186 aerations through this process, Palmer said, and 526 of those customers also bought \$82,000 worth of seed jobs.

A clear focus, Palmer said, is most important in managing specialty services.

"Don't let some of those projects distract you from your core mission or what you're really trying to do economically" he said. "Stay with what you do best and focus on that. Learn from it and take opportunities."

Interested in attending or sponsoring the 2014 LM Lawn Care Forum? Contact Publisher Bill Roddy at broddy@northcoastmedia.net for sponsorship details or Editor Marisa Palmieri at mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net for content and attendance details.



Irrigation Show hits 6-year high in education participants

For the first time since its inception in 1979, the Irrigation Association's (IA's) annual Irrigation Show & Education Conference traveled to Austin, Texas. During the first week of November, about 4,000 participants and 315 exhibiting companies filled the Austin Convention Center to check out the latest industry technologies, conduct business, learn best practices and network with peers.

Austin proved to be a good location for this year's event—the education conference saw the highest numbers of class enrollment since 2007 and irrigation seminars and technical sessions were well attended. The event's 83 educational offerings

provided attendees with opportunities to earn IA continuing education units, with 25 landscape irrigation classes and seminars approved by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to earn licensed Texas irrigators TCEQ credits.

Once the exhibition opened, attendees crowded the show floor to view the record number of irrigation

products on display at the New Product Contest showcase, chat with exhibitors and participate in education sessions.

Backstage sessions included an update from Smart Water Application Technologies and a Smart Irrigation Month briefing, where awards were presented to the 2013 Smart Marketing Contest winners:

- ▶ **Affiliate—Agriculture:** University of Georgia, Stripling Irrigation Research Park (Camilla, Ga.);
- ▶ **Affiliate—Landscape:** City of Greeley, Colo., Water Conservation Program (Greeley, Colo.);
- ▶ **Agriculture:** McCrometer (Hemet, Calif.);
- ▶ **Contractor:** James River Grounds Management (Glen Allen, Va.);
- ▶ **Distributor:** Ewing Irrigation (Phoenix); and
- ▶ **Manufacturer:** Hunter Industries (San Marcos, Calif.).

Competition was stiff for this year's New Product Contest, with a record number of 50 entries. Awardees included:

Landscape/golf

- ▶ **Winner:** The Toro Co., Toro EVOLUTION Series Controller;
- ▶ **Honorable Mention:** Hydro-Rain, HRC990 Battery-Powered Controller and Moisture Sensor Plug-In; and
- ▶ **Honorable Mention:** Rain Bird Corp., ESP – SMTE;

Specialty

- ▶ **Winner:** Hydro-Rain, Irrigation Audit App and Hydro-Rain Sprinkler Catch Cups;
- ▶ **Honorable Mention:** Illumicare Group Limited, Woody; and
- ▶ **Honorable Mention:** RainHarvest Systems, RainMaster 5100 Pro Rainwater Harvesting System.

Preparation for next year's show in Phoenix, Nov. 17-21, is already underway. IA once again will welcome the International Professional Pond Companies Association and American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association as co-locating partners. Future conferences are slated for Long Beach, Calif. (Nov. 9-13, 2015), and Las Vegas (Dec. 5-9, 2016).

» WEB EXTRA

The 2013 GIE+EXPO and the Green Industry Conference, held in October in Louisville, Ky., both saw increased turnouts. Get the full story at ow.ly/qmlN6.

MAILBOX



Veterans as laborers?

Seriously, hire vets. I'm a vet and a landscaper, but here's the issue: Say the "average" soldier/seamen gets out of the military with great medical benefits, and E-4/E-5 pay. He's probably making \$2,300 per month, plus nearly no-cost health care, then if he's married he's getting a housing allowance at around \$1,700 per month and a food allowance at another \$350 or so. This means he's used to making \$4,000 a month or

more. For a typical LCO, that means having to pay that guy \$20 to \$23 per hour or more. To a guy with no landscaping experience, that's a fine foreman rate, but the industry needs labor—workers—not high-end people. We have all those. These guys aren't going to want to get out of the military to make \$15 to \$18 per hour with a layoff period of three to five months depending on region. It's not an easy-fit shoe.

Ted Pendagast

via Facebook, in response to LM's November issue

Kudos? Complaints? Share your thoughts with the *Landscape Management* team by emailing mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net.