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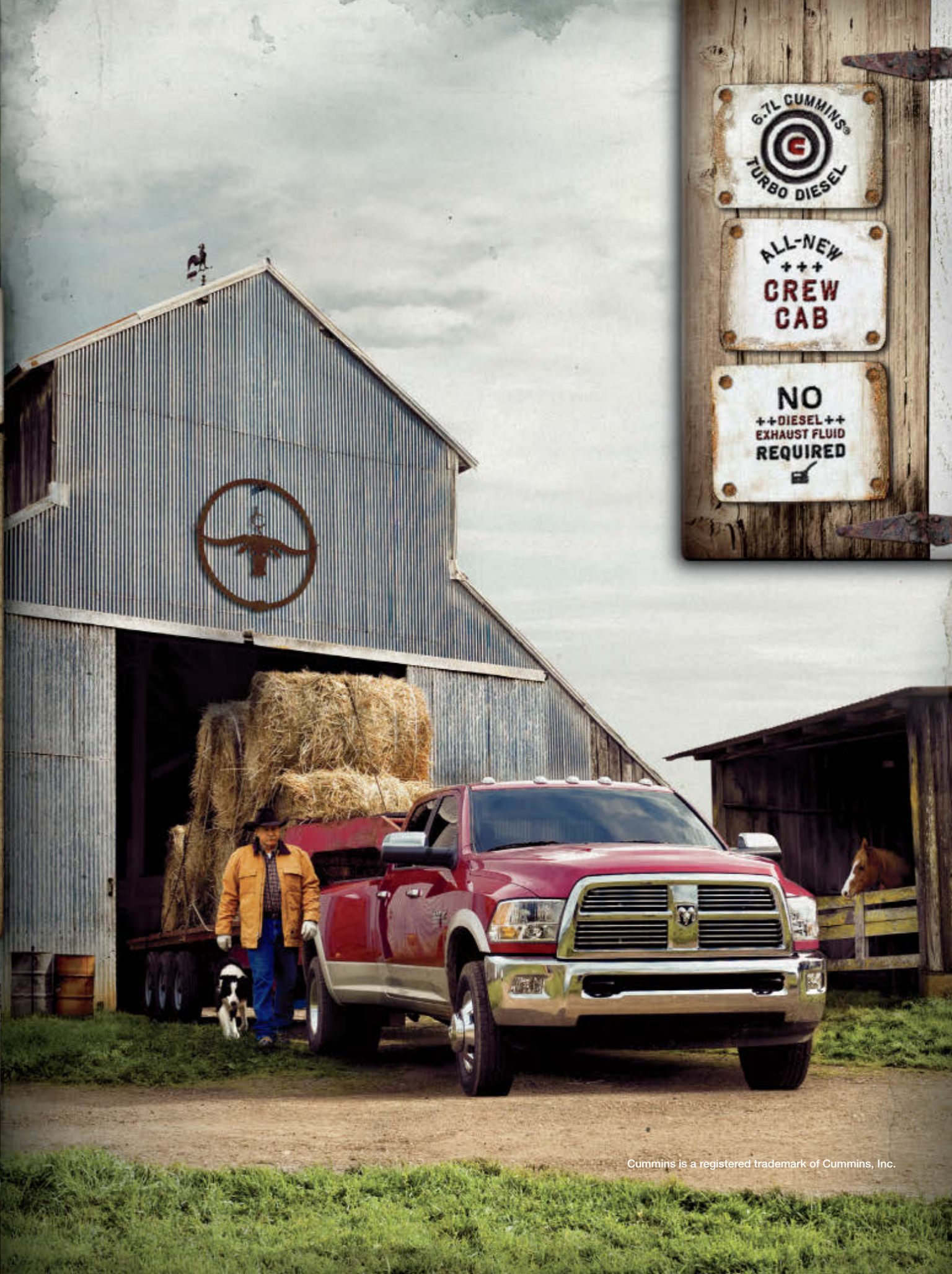
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MAY 2010  
VOL 49, ISSUE 5



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**LM MARKET MATCH** We've made your life a little easier by supplying icons that direct you to stories targeting your core business.

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## Landscape Management

**OUR MISSION:** *Landscape Management* — the leading information resource for large, successful lawn care, landscape maintenance, design/build and irrigation professionals — empowers Green Industry professionals to learn and grow from their peers and our exclusive business intelligence. Serving as the industry conscience, we not only report on but also help shape news, views, trends and solutions.



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# FIRSTCUT

NICOLE WISNIEWSKI EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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## Give a little, get a little

**M**y neighbor, Sean, is one of the most giving people I know. I live in the Cleveland snow belt, and we had some serious accumulation early this year. One morning, just as I was putting on layers of warm clothes and boots and grabbing the snow shovel, he walked his snowblower over to clear my driveway. He saved our backs more than a few times this winter.

In the spring, he is usually the first one to mow his lawn ... and the common areas on our street ... and some of the neighbors' yards. He cruises around on his mower, and before we've even had our first cup of coffee, he's done. "I enjoy it," he says, and leaves it at that.

Sean's giving attitude inspires others on the street. After one particularly bad winter storm, he started clearing neighbors' driveways before many made it home from work. Once they got home, at least four other neighbors joined in. Before long, the impromptu crew had every driveway on the street cleared.

My husband and I tend to feel guilty after these generous acts. We always want to reciprocate. But, most of the time, Sean refuses to let us.

So I tend to talk about him ... a lot. He owns a window and door installation business, and I recommend him ... a lot. His regular unselfish acts speak volumes about his character and, in my opinion, his work ethic.

One person doing something for someone else is great. But an entire industry providing needed services across the country is extraordinary.

On April 22 – Earth Day – more than 3,000 Green Industry professionals put a hold on regular business to donate their services to various community projects in 38 states across the U.S. and Canada during the Professional Landcare Network's 2nd annual Day of Service. *Landscape Management's* Ron Hall, Dan Jacobs and myself traveled to Ohio, Colorado and Connecticut, respectively, to join various landscape teams in their efforts.

For each of us, it was a special experience:

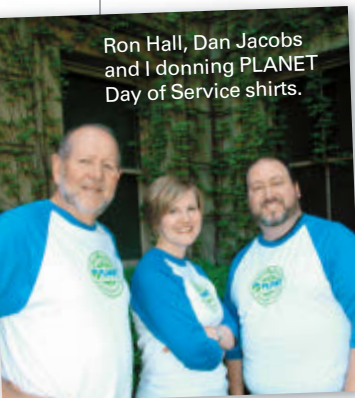
- ▶ Because of a lack of funds and ongoing vandalism at Tarlton, OH's Cross Mound Park, the entrance gate remains closed to visitors. But Ron witnessed its potential reopening because of Mirrorscapes' service.
- ▶ After hearing about Riverside Cemetery's years of

water challenges, Dan watched industry efforts pick up the spirits of cemetery overseers and give new, more sustainable life to the 134-year-old grounds.

▶ And I witnessed the New Milford, CT-based YardApes' crew give all of their effort — without earning a penny — to benefit the community's children.

These events gave back to us in more ways than one. Now it's our turn. In this issue, we showcase these teams' distinctive projects and highlight what it did for them, both personally and professionally.

Who says one good deed doesn't lead to another?



Ron Hall, Dan Jacobs and I donning PLANET Day of Service shirts.

# Landscape Management

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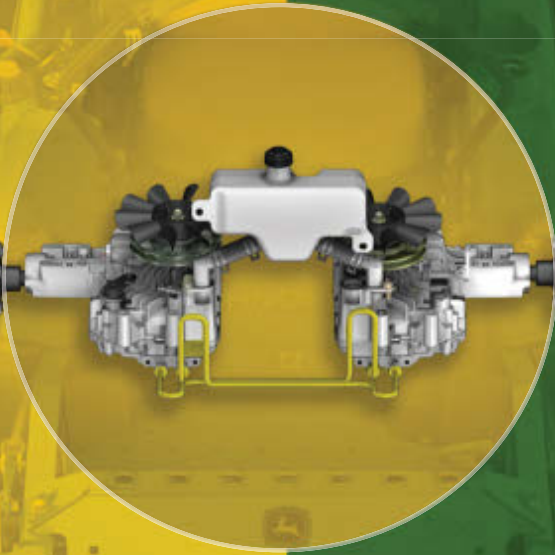
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## Victims of our own promises?

It's mid-spring, and many of us are putting in 50 or more hours a week to meet property owners' expectations.

What level of expectations are we establishing with customers, especially in regard to landscape services? Are we promising perfection or near perfection? It seems many of us are, and, thanks to the knowledge we've gained about landscape care and to modern chemistry, we can almost make it happen. This in spite of unpredictable weather, techs who call in sick or mowers that go on the fritz midweek.

### The bar is set high

There's a term for what some of us are promising. Let's call it the Augusta National Syndrome, after the private golf club in Georgia that each April hosts The Masters Tournament where an audience of millions is treated to days of televised coverage of images of perfectly manicured, weed-free, deep-green turfgrass in a landscape of spring-blossoming ornamentals in all of their pink, purple and milky white glory. I've often wondered if this spring spectacle — grass, flowers bluebirds and all — hasn't contributed to an unrealistic vision of what our own landscapes should look like.

---

I often wonder if we're **promising too much** and **doing too little** to provide customers a more sustainable understanding of their landscape care.

That kind of unnatural beauty comes at a steep price in terms of labor, equipment, chemicals and water. The golf club can afford it, of course, but can the rest of us. Or our environment, for that matter?

Yes, we in the landscape service industry have gotten expert in promising manicured, uniformly green and essentially weed-free turfsapes, not that the mowing, fertilization and pest control practices we've developed over the past half century haven't, served our clients and ourselves extremely well.

Even so, I'm beginning to wonder if we're promising too much and doing too little to educate ourselves, our teams and our customers to a more sustainable approach to landscape care.

I'm wondering if we're relying too much on many of the same practices that have gotten us to this point (for better or worse), and we're paying too little attention to the concerns of a growing segment of the public, lawmakers and regulatory authorities over issues such as emissions, noise, water waste, inappropriate chemical use and non-point-source pollution.

Yes, we know that by mowing turfgrass properly — no more than 1/3rd of the leaf blade and at a higher height — we can dramatically reduce weed populations using far less herbicides.

Yes, we know that once we improve clients' properties, following best management fertilization and pest control guidelines, we can maintain attractive lawns using far less pesticides. That's assuming we've established the proper level of expectations with our clients.

Yes, we know that bagging grass clippings is wasteful with little upside other than it allows us to meet the expectations we've set with certain of our clients — clients that don't understand the costs of bagging clippings, both financially and in terms of the environment.

Yes, there's a price to be paid for everything, and I'm convinced the closer we attempt to approach what I call The Augusta National Syndrome, the higher the price we pay.

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# THE BIG GIVE

Landscapers across the country lend communities their time and talents.

BY **NICOLE WISNIEWSKI** EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

SURE, DISCOUNTS and add-ons can get customers in the door. But a growing number of clients aren't basing their purchasing decisions solely on service and price anymore. A business' social consciousness and community involvement also can turn customer heads.

Every day, more companies are watching their employees sign up early when the list goes up for blood donors, join teams to build Habitat homes, donate food and money to Harvest for Hunger or spend time as a Big Brother or Big Sister.


According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, 61 million Americans — 26% of the adult population — give approximately 8.1 billion hours and \$158 billion worth of volunteer service annually.

In terms of employer-sponsored volunteer programs, 81% of companies use them to support core business functions, and nearly 50% incorporate volunteer programs into overall business plans.

Green Industry businesses also are contributing to this growth. Compared to last year, 1,000 more landscape and lawn care professionals donated time and service to the Professional Landcare Network's second annual Day of Service on April 22 — the 40th annual Earth Day. This amounted to more than 3,000 people in 38 states and Canada.

Webster's defines community as a group of people with a common background or shared interests within a society, and ser-

*continued on page 10*



CALCP President  
Andy Ferguson  
helps rehabilitate  
Riverside Cemetery.





MirrorScapes' employees helped revive Cross Mound Park while a pair of YardApes workers (inset) spread mulch at a newly installed playground.

## DAY of SERVICE

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**Cross Mound Park**  
Tarlton, OH

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**Riverside Cemetary**  
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### FIELD REPORT #3:

**Children's Playground**  
New Milford, CT

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 vice as providing that community with something it needs. As a gathering place for family and friends, industry experts agree landscapes are at the hearts of these communities.

So as an item in a landscaper's marketing agenda, professionals recommend properly planned community service as a low-cost way to improve employee attitude and retention, enhance goodwill, drive revenue and soothe the soul.

### Beefing up the bottom line

Research shows there is a direct correlation between active community outreach programs and increased revenue and customer loyalty for businesses that engage in helping their communities.

To measure return-on-investment from community service events, start by maximizing priceless advertising opportunities. Sending press releases before the event and choosing a highly visible or important town project can draw press. A front-page story in the daily local paper is invaluable ... and possible. It's happened to Shayne Newman, president of New Milford, CT-based YardApes two years in a row after his company's Day of Service projects (and as a result of other volunteer

Framed through a climbing wall, YardApes' crew install pavers.

efforts his company supports).

And what visibility like that brings is clear: Clients.

Last year, Greener By Design chose a Day of Service project located in a market CEO Richard Heller wanted to expand into. He picked up 22 clients in that new market, and 11 of them mentioned hearing about the company from his Day of Service project.

Adequate promotion of the work before and after the event helped boost these numbers. Heller videotaped his project last year, edited it down and put it up on YouTube and the company's Facebook fan page. Greener By Design typically picks up two to three new fans a week with fresh content, such as videos of employees at work to tips on growing herbs or trends in eco-art to updates on local speaking engagements or gardening classes.

In addition to proper promotion and planning, volunteering can directly influence sales through improved employee attitudes.



According to the study "Good Companies, Better Employees," some of the outcomes of effective employee volunteer programs include:

- Increased job satisfaction levels.
- Increased positive word of mouth among employees about their employer and an improved rating among employees for their employer as a place to work.
- Higher employee retention rates.
- Employees who participated in volunteer programs appeared to be more prone to pursue promotion and development activities in the months following the participation in the

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