

TURFGRASS 2010

Turfgrass 2010 is the first time the MTF has ever launched a comprehensive fundraising campaign in its history. This initiative has set an aggressive goal of raising \$3.5 million by the end of the year 2010. This effort will further position the MTF in a leadership role for supporting turfgrass research, extension and scholarship in Michigan and nationally. Dollars raised as part of this effort will allow increased annual funding of research and support projects and also significantly increase the three endowment funds to insure long-term stability of the Michigan Turfgrass Foundation and its ability to address your research needs.

This campaign will help ensure that today's research problems are aggressively addressed and that the fundamental research needed to solve tomorrow's problems can be adequately funded.

The goals of Turfgrass 2010 are:

- Double the annual research and support grants
- Increase the LaFontaine Endowment by \$2.1 million
- Increase the Rieke Endowment to \$210,000
- Increase the Founder's Society Fund to \$500,000



"Clearly we can take turfgrass partnerships to the next level."

Tom Smith, Michigan Turfgrass Foundation

Turfgrass areas make up a large component of Michigan's landscape and impact nearly every Michigan resident through the many recreational, aesthetic, and functional uses they provide. Quality turfgrass management is a science requiring numerous educational, social



and environmental principles to achieve success. There are several obtainable objectives using turfgrass as a foundation. Turfgrass 2010 will help achieve these goals by funding research and extension activities.

Turf to protect our environment

As a major component of our landscape, turfgrass areas are part of natural resource protection. Environmental stewardship programs for professionals and educational outreach efforts for homeowners can use turfgrass as a model for successful stewardship of natural resources.

The turfgrass industry has long provided leadership in the protection of natural resources through industry outreach programs combining partnerships with advocacy groups and government agencies. Turfgrass 2010 will allow the expansion and coordination of research, outreach, and regulatory policy to better protect our natural resources.

Turf in education

Many schools struggle to find innovative ways to teach students, particularly ones deemed "at risk", a working knowledge of math and science skills. These fundamental elements become critical when seeking jobs with long term wage earning potential and where supervisory or technical skills are required.

Turfgrass 2010, bolstered by regional cooperation, would support the expansion of programs contributing to the vibrancy of Michigan's schools that incorporate environmental principles, promote neighborhood pride, and integrate young people into the economic commu-

nity. This model will encourage youth to continue their education beyond high school by exposing them at an early age to the link between education and career.

Turf to create jobs

The demand for qualified people who can manage attractive and functional turfgrass areas continues to grow. The Michigan Green Industry Labor Study suggests that over a third of all existing "Green Industry" jobs will require filling the following season, offering a potential for 11,000 new jobs in the turfgrass industry each year. Additionally, this study suggests that the "Green Industry" as a whole represents a stable jobs market relatively resistant to economic fluctuations.

The turfgrass industry offers a diverse array of jobs relating to the professional care of golf courses, school grounds, athletic fields, home and commercial lawns, parks, cemeteries and sod production. The range of job categories within these segments include entry level positions, skilled jobs with technical or formal training, positions with supervisory or managerial



responsibilities, as well as entrepreneurial opportunities for business ownership.

Turf as a functional land use

Many communities across Michigan are planning for and experiencing the revitalization of their metropolitan and suburban centers. Priorities focus on strategies to attract young workers and families to vibrant communities. Creative land use and re-use serves as a key theme in this and other urban revitalization. The role of turfgrass in these efforts becomes significant as it is often used either as the primary visual or functional and recreational component in the development or re-development of the landscape.

Creative landscape design and planning can also utilize these turf areas to trap and retain storm water. This provides a cost effective storm water management tool to reduce the amount of storm water runoff into fragile water sheds. Groundwater is recharged as retained storm water is naturally filtered through the turf system.

A successful history of partnerships already exists between the turfgrass industry, MSU, state agencies, and advocacy groups. Clearly we have an opportunity to take this experience and move it to the next level of research and outreach with funding from Turfgrass 2010.

The Annual Fund

Annual contributions that are not designated to one of the endowments are the lifeblood of the Michigan Turfgrass Foundation. Annual contributions are made by all industry groups through fundraisers, group donations, individual contributions, and donations facilitated by the Golf Association of Michigan member golf clubs and their membership.

These contributions fund the annual research and extension support grants to MSU faculty. All grant requests are first reviewed by an industry committee, ranked in priority by this committee, then referred to the MTF

Board of Directors for action. Each year, the MTF receives requests totaling 2-3 times the amount of available funding. This means that many valuable research projects go unfunded and in-state visits and extension activities of the turf faculty to solve turf problems are limited.

Turfgrass 2010 calls for doubling annual funding to MSU. Accomplishing this goal will have significant impact on solving current research problems in turf and making sure that the MSU turf team can meet the extension needs of turf managers and residents in Michigan. 100% of annual donations are used for research and extension support grants – no operating expenses or overhead are taken from any annual donation to the MTF!



Debbie Swartz, MTESP coordinator