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**Sports Turf Managers Association Conference Experiences Record Number of Countries Represented**

***Four-day Event Features 1,300 Attendees Hailing from 18 Countries***

**(LAWRENCE, Kan.)** – [Sports Turf Managers Association](http://SportsTurfManagersAssociation.org) (STMA) – the professional organization for more than 2,600 men and women who manage sports fields worldwide who are critical to the safety of athletes and coaches – recently hosted its 28<sup>th</sup> annual Conference & Exhibition in Orlando, Fla. with over 175 exhibitors and 1,300 attendees from a record 18 countries.

The four-day event was highlighted by the “Seminar on Wheels Tour” at various professional, collegiate and youth sports complexes in the Orlando region. In addition, attendees took part in more than 60 educational sessions, visited sports turf exhibits and networked with environmental science leaders.

“Widely known as the ‘Super Bowl of the sports turf industry,’ we once again offered a unique platform to network, exchange ideas and share best practices,” says Tim Van Loo, Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM), newly-elected STMA President and Manager of Athletics Turf/Grounds for Iowa State University. “The knowledge gained will aid sports turf managers globally in their pursuit of maintaining safe playing surfaces that are also aesthetically pleasing.”

SAFE, the association’s charitable foundation, raised more than \$45,000 during the Conference through its Jan. 24 golf tournament, “Night of Bowling” and silent and live auctions throughout the week. Proceeds benefit educational programs, scholarships and grants with the goal of enriching communities through safe, sustainable sports and recreation fields for all athletes.

Laura Katen, President of Katen Consulting, provided a keynote address on Jan. 26 to the STMA membership. She discussed the topic of professionalism, and how communication at an individual and organizational level influences how you are perceived by your peers, employer and community.

STMA held its Awards Banquet on Jan. 27 to recognize “Field of the Year” winners. It also bestowed Founders Awards to four members, commemorating significant contributions to the profession. Recipients included:

- Dick Ericson Award: Tom Nielsen, Louisville Bats
- George Toma Award: Bruce Suddeth, University of South Carolina Upstate
- William H. Daniel Award: Jason Kruse, Ph.D., University of Florida
- Harry C. Gill Award: Darian Daily, formerly with the Cincinnati Bengals (awarded posthumously)

This year, the “Student Challenge Cup” had participation from 35 teams, culminating in more than 125 scholars from across the country. These students represented both two and four-year colleges from 20 states. The Cup featured a proctored exam on Jan. 26.

New additions to the Conference include Chapter Board Members' Reception, multiple “Fun Run/Walk” times, led by chair Tom Nielsen of the Louisville Bats, and an educational track created specifically for K-12 sports turf managers

Since 1989, STMA has hosted its annual convention at major cities across the U.S., including San Diego, Calif. in 2016, where an estimated \$3.9 million economic was generated for the city during its annual Conference & Exhibition. Next year’s event will be held in Fort Worth, Texas Jan. 16-19, 2018. Additional future sites include Phoenix, Ariz. (2019) and West Palm Beach, Fla. (2020).

For more info: [stma.org](http://stma.org), [twitter.com/fieldexperts](https://twitter.com/fieldexperts), 800.323.3875.

### **About STMA**

STMA is the not-for-profit, professional association for men and women who manage sports fields worldwide and are critical to the safety of athletes and coaches. Since 1981, the association and its 34 local chapters have been providing education, information and sharing practical knowledge in the art and science of sports field management. Its more than 2,600 members oversee sports fields and facilities at schools, colleges and universities, parks and recreational facilities, and professional sports stadiums.

For more information: [www.stma.org](http://www.stma.org), 800.323.3875.

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