

President's MESSAGE

Our Time Is Now

A wise, hard-working man, Thomas A. Edison, once said, "Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."



A recurring theme I have been hearing the last several months is what a great opportunity emerald ash borer could be for all of us in Wisconsin. Being a municipal forester, my jurisdiction over ash species compromises 15-20% of the workload. Hence, I've been somewhat skeptical about this tremendous opportunity lurking across our state lines. However, after attending the 2007 WAA/WDNR annual conference, I'm ready to put on the overalls. Indeed, opportunities abound!

The WDNR put a lot of thought and time into producing the EAB Toolkit. Not because they needed something to do, but because they are partners in the upcoming EAB battle and want all of us to be prepared. The toolkit is appropriately named because it gives all of us the opportunity to educate our workers, citizens, environmental groups and even our elected officials on what to expect in the next decade.

Conference attendees also received the revised ANSI Z133.1 standard to use for reviewing their safety programs. This is an opportunity to update how safely our crews perform daily operations. If we make necessary changes now, we can prevent the next accident.

Many of us took the opportunity to improve our communication, sales, and business skills by listening to the programs offered by Debra Schmidt and Eric Duchinsky. Don't be hesitant. Try the suggestions they offered us. I'm betting that if applied to the right situations, their solutions will work for you and earn you some profit as well.

Whether it was breakfast with the exhibitors, morning and afternoon breaks between sessions, long lunches or social time to visit with old friends, meet new people, talk over issues, or discuss upcoming plans, I hope many of you used the annual conference, not just as an education opportunity, but as a networking opportunity to bring back something positive to your business or organization.

A long time ago my employer told me that if you pick up one idea at the conference that you can implement which will make a positive difference or prevent a negative result, then the time and dollars spent is worth every penny. I hope that many of you found the annual conference to be worth every penny.

On Wednesday, February 14, I was fortunate enough to attend the Day on the Hill event held in Madison. After taking advantage of some networking opportunities, we descended on the capitol to talk with legislators about upcoming issues affecting many of us in the green industry.

Touring the remodeled building was worth the trip itself, but what really impressed me was that the politicians we talked with, their staffers, and even non-industry lobby groups had all heard of EAB. I realize now, more than ever, that there is a real awareness and genuine concern in our state of the potential disaster this tiny green pest is going to cause. I also recognize that being prepared in advance is a real opportunity for most of us in this industry.

I encourage all of you to educate yourselves, network with each other, brainstorm, discuss and plan ahead for utilizing our new-found opportunities to educate the public, increase public awareness, and promote the importance of our noble profession.

We have always been a dedicated group of workers, not afraid to put our overalls on and go to work. Opportunities abound.

Our time is now.

Sincerely,

Mark Freberg, WAA President