

## Lake Jem Farms Principals Recognized By Florida Farm Bureau

Keith Truenow and his wife, Dodi Hurley, owners of Lake Jem Farms in Lake County, Florida are finalists in the 2002 Young Farmer & Rancher awards competition. The annual competition, conducted by the Florida Farm Bureau, recognizes Florida's "best and brightest" young farming family (35 years of age and under). Three finalist families have been selected from all contestants through a process of screening and judging that includes review of written applications and site visits by Farm Bureau representatives. The winning couple will be announced at the Florida Farm Bureau convention in Daytona Beach, FL, Oct.30-Nov.1.

Lake Jem Farms has been a licensed producer since 2000, and produces Pal-

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metto St. Augustine, EMPIRE Zoysia and Celebration Bermudagrass, as well as other turfgrass varieties.

*Please send your business' community news items for **The Fish Wrap** to Sis Reda, Tel. 843.849.1288 or Email, sreda@sodsolutions.com.*

sodsolutions.com



We're Updating Our Web Site Again. Check Out What's New, Including Celebration Bermudagrass  
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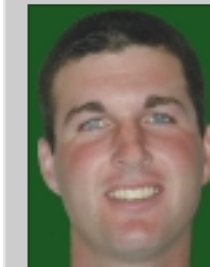
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## Innovation As A Business Strategy Successful Businesses Share New Ideas

### Shared Information, Shared Solutions

By Joel Lane - Field Representative



Turfgrass professionals know that diagnosing problems is often a difficult task. However, it is likely that any problem that you may experience

isn't an isolated incident. Communicating with other farmers and industry professionals is a great way to stay abreast of current technical issues, and quickly address adverse conditions.

At Sod Solutions, we gather lots of technical information by talking with our producers. When you tell us about your issues, we are able to respond; and we are also able to add valuable information to the common pool of shared data.

One of the best examples of shared communication occurred last spring. In late February, a few South Florida producers complained about "winter damage" in their EMPIRE. After several weeks of investigation by Sod Solutions and these producers, we were able to identify the real culprit: the hunting billbug. Since the problem occurred at several farms, we initiated an insecticide trial at one location. With help from Dave Basquin and Billy Cisneros at Silver Strand Sod in Immokalee, FL, we gathered helpful data on control measures for billbugs. The tech bulletin sent to all licensed EMPIRE and EMPRESS producers was the result of information gathered with the cooperation of these South Florida farms.

Cooperative efforts help everyone produce a quality product. If you have technical issues to share, or if you would like to cooperate on a technical solution, please contact us.

In the final quarter of 2002, it is appropriate to review this year's progress, and plan for 2003. No doubt, some of us have experienced, and may continue to experience, tough economic times. Factors beyond our control, and even beyond our borders, are influencing businesses and economies. But, a resource needed to survive – and better, thrive – may already be yours. It's called innovation.

Over the years we have talked to successful businesses about how they have weathered economic downturns. Most of them have planned how their organization should perform for the long haul. Most have also cultivated new innovations that evolved into integral parts of their businesses.

Innovation has been key to Sod Solutions' growth. We believe that we have applied some uncommon solutions to common industry challenges. We have been willing to examine and implement promising new turfgrass brands and related services. Most have worked; some haven't. We will continue to diversify in ways that support our growth and that of our producers. In this newsletter, you will read about innovations that have been developed with licensed producers and their organizations: SOD GRO™ fertilizer; turfgrass trials; joint marketing; and the release of Celebration Bermudagrass in two states.

Upcoming challenges and opportunities may prompt you to reassess your work, or to pursue innovation. As ideas come to mind, we want to hear about them. We can discuss the possibility of direct involvement, or we can simply be a sounding board.

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## Celebration Update

### Joint Releases in Two States Generate Funds, Licensees

The initial phases of the joint release of Celebration Bermudagrass with turfgrass organizations in two states have produced positive results for all involved.

Earlier this year Sod Solutions announced joint release agreements for Celebration in Florida and Texas. In Florida, Sod Solutions teamed up with the Florida Sod Growers Cooperative (FSGC); and in Texas, with the Turfgrass Producers of Texas (TPT). The agreements provide that license fees and royalties are split between Sod Solutions and the respective organizations, and that the organizations provide marketing and quality control assistance to Sod Solutions and licensees. The provisions augment marketing support for the licensees, and enhance communications between producers.

In Florida, the initial licensing period ended in August, generating more than \$28,000 for the FSGC. The funds are derived from licensing fees remitted by sod producers. Sixteen Florida turfgrass producers have been licensed. Future licensing applicants will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by a joint committee of Sod Solutions and FSGC delegates. All Celebration licensees are FSGC members in good standing and meet Southern Seed Certification requirements.

The initial licensing phase in Texas ended in September, generating \$28,000 for the TPT. Fourteen Texas turfgrass producers have been licensed. Future applicants will be considered by Sod Solutions and TPT representatives. All licensees are TPT members in good standing and meet Texas Blue Tag Certification requirements.

"We are pleased to work with the FSGC and the TPT: they are professional and progressive," says Tobey Wagner. "We applaud their willingness to develop mutually beneficial member programs."

## Technical Tip - Winterizing

As winter approaches, here are a few tips on how to properly prepare your turfgrasses:



**Mowing:** The height of cut is very important going into winter. Leaving grass too tall slows down the green up process in the spring. As a general rule, mow these varieties at the following heights in winter for quickened spring green up:

Palmetto: 1"  
EMPIRE: ¾"-1"  
EMPRESS: ½"-1"

**Fertilization:** Avoid using high nitrogen fertilizers within a month of your area's first frost date. Use of balanced fertilizers containing iron and other minor nutrients prior to winter will add color, and improve your turf's cold hardiness.

**Important note:** Observe your zoysia varieties as they emerge from dormancy in the spring. Areas that are slow to green up may be a result of billbug injury. As some producers have learned, billbug injury, which can appear in early spring, can look like slow spring green up.

## New Product Introduction



Through a cooperative effort, Sod Solutions and Bethel Farms of Arcadia, FL will introduce SOD GRO™ fertilizer in November 2002. SOD GRO™, a 5-2-0 fertilizer with iron, is recommended by Sod Solutions for use on Palmetto, EMPIRE, EMPRESS, and Celebration turfgrasses. SOD GRO™ may be used on new or existing lawns, and with some other turfgrasses. SOD GRO™ will be available for wholesale purchase by licensed producers and retailers. SOD GRO™ will provide producers and their customers with the ideal fertilizer for Sod Solutions turfgrasses. Watch your mail for more information on SOD GRO™ and how your business can make money on distribution and sale of this new product.



Tobey Wagner  
President

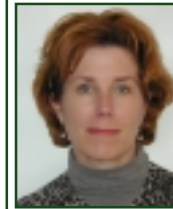
# Tobey Talk

**Above Left**  
With cooler weather approaching, consider these preparation tips.

**At Left**  
SOD GRO™ fertilizer premieres late this year. Watch for more information.

## Individualized Marketing Update

### Joint Marketing Efforts Produce Win-Win Results



Sis Reda  
Director of Marketing

# Market Rap

In the first Quarter of this year, as an integral part of our marketing plan, we offered all licensed producers the opportunity to take advantage of a variety of Sod Solutions marketing support activities that could be tailored to producers' individual marketing needs. The areas of support range from marketing and sales planning to turfgrass sales support, product education, special events, training and more. Licensees can utilize this support at no cost to themselves. Our goals, in offering assistance in the form of individualized marketing activities, have been: 1) to work closely and collaboratively with licensed producers to assist them in achieving their unique sales and marketing objectives; and, 2) to promote mutual business success.

Since the program began in March, 36% of U.S. producers have requested individualized support. For 2002 to date, Sod Solutions has spent 526 staff hours, and traveled to eight states (some more than once), fulfilling these requests. Our company marketing expenditures have increased by some 20% this year, in part to fund travel and production costs associated with individualized marketing efforts. We have participated in many marketing planning meetings and one-on-one consultations; attended, co-planned and prepared presentations for special events; created advertising artwork and news releases; conducted problem-solving teleconferences; designed sales promotions; reviewed Web site functionality; provided product training; and much more.

While Sod Solutions has offered – and will continue to offer – marketing support in the form of planning strategies, materials and other concrete resources, we also have benefited tremendously from exposure to producers' ideas and innovations. In the next issue of *The Fish Wrap*, we will describe some key marketing issues,

## Marketing Highlights For September - December 2002

### September

- 10 Ads in Turf Industry Publications
- Individualized Marketing Program 2002: Producers' Meetings in SC, NC
- Special Event Support - Tampa, FL FTGA Marketing Presentation
- FSGC Celebration Joint Committee Meeting Tampa, FL
- Celebration Sales, Marketing Visits - TX
- Multiple Rush Limbaugh Radio Ads (FL)

### October

- 10 Ads in Turf Industry Publications
- Individualized Marketing Program 2002: Producers' Meetings in MO, AR, AL
- Special Event Support - Benton, AL Rhyne's Select Field Day to Showcase EMPIRE Zoysia
- Event Support - A. Duda & Sons Sod Division Meeting - LaBelle, FL
- Sales, Marketing Visits - Australia
- Multiple Rush Limbaugh Radio Ads (FL)

### November

- 10 Ads in Turf Industry Publications
- Multiple *Rush Limbaugh* Radio Ads (FL)
- GA Sod Producers Field Day - Nov. 6 in Tifton, Ga
- Update of sodsolutions.com to Expand Celebration Bermudagrass Information and Licensed Producer Search Function
- TPT Celebration Joint Committee Meeting

### December

- 10 Ads in Turf Industry Publications
- Individualized Marketing Program 2002 Producers' Meetings in TX, AZ
- Multiple *Rush Limbaugh* Radio Ads (FL)

insights and solutions that producers have shared with us. We welcome your ideas, also. Please call or e-mail me with any ideas that have worked especially well for you.