



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **SPORTSFIELDS MAINTENANCE PROGRAM A FIRST FOR NORTH AMERICA**

On May 26, 16 local high school students took to the turf at McLeod Athletic Park in the Township of Langley to train – not to practice football or work on their track and field skills, but to learn what it takes to build and maintain a sportsfield facility.

The session, called First Green on Sportsfields, was the first program of its kind to be held in North America. Presented by the Township of Langley's Parks Operations Department in partnership with Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU), Western Canada Turfgrass Association (WCTA), and Sports Turf Canada (STC), the event was held to give Grade 9 students from Langley Secondary School a first-hand look at how sportsfields are designed, constructed, and cared for.

"With the importance of outdoor recreational opportunities in urban settings, turf management is a growing industry," said Township Manager of Parks Operations Tab Buckner. "Sportsfields are a major part of our community's health and well-being. This was an opportunity to work with young people and give them some insight into how we manage these important and busy facilities."

First Green on Sportsfields was modelled after a program called First Green, which was started in Washington State a decade ago, and uses golf courses as environmental learning labs to teach science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). WCTA has hosted two successful First Green pilot events over the past two years, at the Vancouver Golf Club and the Redwoods Golf Course in Walnut Grove. With First Green on Sportsfields, the Township and its partners have adapted the program to focus on the sportsfield component.

"With the demands placed on sportsfields, successful turf managers need to be highly educated," said KPU Turf Management instructor Stan Kazymierchuk. "This session touched on the science and technology involved with maintaining a sports field, featuring STEM learning with elements of chemistry, electricity, biology, and engineering."

"This was a great opportunity to see kids apply their math and science skills to this type of an approach, and let them know there are all kinds of opportunities out there in this area for future employment," said Gord Stewart, Acting Superintendent of Schools for Langley School District #35.

The students went to a number of stations hosted by Township staff and guest instructors, and learned about everything from soil science, grass species, and water usage to sportsfield maintenance practices, power tools, and electricity.

“There is a lot involved in sportsfield maintenance, but it can be a really rewarding career,” Buchner said. “We were really pleased to be able to give these young people a hands-on, on-site experience.”

The students who participated said they had fun and learned a lot during the session, and would definitely recommend the experience to others.

McLeod Athletic Park, located at 56 Avenue and 2016 Street, is a world-class athletic facility that has been chosen to host events such as the 2010 BC Summer Games, the 2013 Special Olympics BC Summer Games, the 2013/2014 Legion National Youth Track and Field Championships, and the 2014 BC Seniors Games. This summer, it will welcome the Whitecaps FC2 soccer team for matches on August 21 and September 5.

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