

## GROWING STATURE

### Jeffrey L. Bruce & Co. expands its turf in landscape architecture

BY MARK KIND  
STAFF WRITER

**T**urfgrass can be a field of dreams, according to Kevin Costner, or a "good walk, spoiled," according to Mark Twain (writing about golf).

It also can be a roof or a parking lot, according to Jeffrey L. Bruce & Co. LLC of North Kansas City.

Growing grass in hostile urban environments is a specialty of the firm, whether working on its designs or as an adviser to other landscape architects.

Peter Schaudt of Chicago architecture firm Peter Lindsay Schaudt Landscape Architecture Inc. said he often calls on Bruce & Co. when something crucial is missing from the

**JEFFREY L. BRUCE & CO. LLC**

**Description:** Landscape architecture/urban design firm

**Top executive:** Jeffrey Bruce

**Employees:** 11

**Revenue:** \$1.3 million (2003)

**Founded:** 1986

**Address:** 1907 Swift Ave., North Kansas City, MO 64116

**Phone:** 816-842-8999

**Internet:** www.jlbruce.com

PLEASE SEE GROWING, PAGE 14

DAVE KAUP PHOTO

Jeffrey Bruce serves special turf to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. The team for his namesake landscape architect firm includes Bob Bushyhead (from left), Shannon Gordon and Richard Yates.



*The day-to-day is what will make your sales special*

**T**o have growth in any company, you need sales consistency. The idea is only 10 percent; the implementation is 90 percent.

Nothing begins until a sale is made, and personal relationships with buyers are everything: "People buy from people."

The better the relationship, the better the chance of making a sale. People buy from the people they trust and like.

Let's get one thing straight: There are no born salespeople. Top performers are not just lucky.

They work hard and put themselves in the right places at the right times.

Most salespeople are average or below average. Look at any company.

How many salespeople are at the top at sales in an organization? Very few.

Improvement is simple: hard work with consistent day-to-day activities.

Let's take a look and see what it takes to be a top salesperson.

**Honesty** — This is a must. You should always be honest. All you have is your reputation. As I mentioned before, "People buy from people." We all like to be around people we trust. You have to be 100 percent honest all the time. Follow the Golden Rule.

**Well-organized** — Develop a system so you know when you called a customer or a prospect and what was said. Index cards and a card box work extremely well. In fact, January-December indexes are an added plus.

When someone says, "Call me in a couple of months," just put the index card under the right month. You also must know your products, services and your customers' needs. Consistently follow up with current and potential customers.

**Persistent** — Play the numbers game. The more prospects you contact, the more sales you will make. Small numbers multiple rapidly. Ten calls a day is more than 200 a month and more than 2,000 a year. If someone says no or they are not interested, you must ask, "Why not?"

**Self-reliant** — Learn to work with minimal direction. Develop a method of

**AT YOUR SERVICE**



HAL BECKER



**10 MINUTES WITH ...**

Kerry L. Lawing,  
president and CEO,  
Lawing Financial Group Inc.  
**Page 15**



**SALES ACADEMY**

**Laaman:** Managers aren't alone with crazy employee excuses  
**Gitomer:** Love your job  
**Pages 16-17**

PLEASE SEE BECKER, PAGE 16

bizwomen.com



Member

Victoria Braden

President/CEO  
Braden Benefit Strategies

## Connect, Support, Learn, Grow.

**Maximize your business  
success with the publishing  
leader in local Business Journals!**

Introducing **Bizwomen.com**, a key resource for networking, information, tools, directories, procurement and most importantly, **LOCAL** business news for what's going on which impacts **YOUR** business.

Bizwomen is a bustling community featuring outstanding Women in Business from your area as well as links and information to local and national women's organizations, tools to improve your bottom line and plenty of networking opportunities to keep your calendar and client list full.

Movers and Shakers, Up-and-Comers, and the "One's To Watch" in your area, or across the country all in one place. Want to know how they got there, what they learned along the way, or better yet, how you can get there too?

**THE BUSINESS JOURNAL**  
SERVING METROPOLITAN KANSAS CITY

www.bizwomen.com

## GROWING: From rooftops to parking lots

FROM PAGE 13

landscape, usually soil.

"On every project we've had challenges where people were concerned about what would work," Schaudt said.

Bruce & Co. has carved out a practice in a discipline not known for entrepreneurship.

Professors dominate the consulting field of turfgrass soil science, and more than 100 of them are employed at public universities nationwide.

"Probably that's our biggest competition," said Jeffrey Bruce, the landscape architecture firm's eponym and principal. "Typically, that's where you'll see landscape architects pick up team members."

Golf course putting greens are the driving force in turfgrass science. Butchered to less than one-eighth inch in height each morning by mowing crews, trampled all day by fat guys wearing cleats and deeply pitted by plunging golf balls, the grass on many putting greens grows in a special sand-based "root zone" — not soil — to survive the constant abuse.

Bruce & Co. has taken the idea further since hiring turfgrass scientist Chuck Dixon, formerly of Turf Diagnostics & Design in Olathe, in 1999. With others at the firm, Dixon has developed root zones for other hostile turf environments, using sand, gravel, compost, ground concrete or other materials.

"We are able to deliver exceptionally affordable turf systems," Bruce said.

North of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art is a lawn growing on a rooftop, thanks to the recent construction of an underground parking garage, said Steve Hoye, general superintendent on the museum expansion project for J.E. Dunn Construction Co.

Bruce & Co. provided the expertise for planting and growing turf on root-zone materials chosen specifically for the roof.

Atop an underground parking garage near Soldier Field in Chicago, Bruce & Co. not only advised on irrigation and prescribed nine different layered root zones for the 12-inch deep turfgrass root zone, the firm also recommended the burial of chunks of Styrofoam to create a rolling terrain on the flat roof, Schaudt said.

But landscaping is more than root zones and turfgrass. It's all about prettifying the world, and Bruce & Co. has a staff of designers sitting at drawing boards, crafting landscape plans.

"We needed somebody who is a good designer," said Phillip Gesue, acquisitions director for Time Equities Inc., the New York firm that's redeveloping the Metropolitan condos in the northeast corner of Downtown.

Gesue wanted to adopt an Asia theme for the nearly one acre of landscaping around the '60s-era building.

"We tried to create an urban oasis," Gesue said. "This is the only condo project in the Downtown Loop that has a copious amount of outdoor landscaping."

Even when working within an exotic theme such as an Asian landscape, Bruce said the firm tries to incorporate a Midwest ecological aesthetic. Oaks, red-buds, hickories, American lindens, dogwoods and limestone can help a landscape look like it belongs.

After taking in \$1.3 million in 2003, the company is planning on 15 percent growth in revenue for 2004 by building on its growing stature in the industry, Bruce said.

It works on about \$20 million worth of construction yearly, he said. Big projects have included a rooftop garden design for the Samsung Cultural Education Center in Seoul, South Korea, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation center's "building in a park" and the redevelopment of North Burnham Park surrounding Chicago's Soldier Field.

**'We are able to deliver  
exceptionally affordable turf systems.'**

**Jeffrey Bruce**

principal of Jeffrey L. Bruce & Co. LLC

More important, Hoye said, Bruce & Co. has the expertise to recommend changes on a project in the middle of construction if for some reason the specified root-zone material can't be found.

"The physical properties of the materials you're working with aren't always the same," Hoye said.

Dixon has even covered surface parking lots with turfgrass.

At the Tennessee Titans stadium in Nashville, 2,500 grassy parking spaces were constructed of a "high-performance reinforced grass paving system" prescribed by Dixon.

"They are very, very popular for tailgating," said Schaudt, who hired Bruce & Co. for the project.

Bruce launched the firm in the mid-1980s. Among the principals, Shannon Gordon oversees the firm's drawing and visualization work, Bob Bushyhead focuses on contracts, Richard Yates is project manager, and Bruce is "sort of the philosopher."

Gesue said the firm's small size made it easy and reassuring to work with because Bruce himself worked on the Metropolitan condos.

"If you go with a really huge design company, you get a lot of junior people cutting their teeth on your project," Gesue said.

REACH MARK KIND at 816-421-5900 or  
mkind@bizjournals.com.