When I was sixteen and began working on a golf course grounds crew I learned:

How to lay sod and keep it alive

How to plant a tree

How to plant flowers

How to rake leaves

How to rake sand bunkers

How to mix gasoline and oil

How to take care of tools

How to use garden tools

How to hang sheet rock

How to dig a hole

How to refill a hole.

How to operate a hand clipper

How to change oil

How to build and set bluebird houses

How to water, how not to over water

How to complete a task with pride every day on the job

How to work hard and produce a product that people appreciated including me

How to get up at 5:30 in the morning

On the golf course:

I watched storm clouds roll in, amazing rain events and beautiful rainbows

I saw breathtaking sunrises and a few sunsets as I was also an evening course waterman

I saved baby turtles

I saw countless bird varieties, deer, fox, woodchucks, waterfowl, muskrats, gofers and golfers

I saved for college

I got a taste for a career I didn’t even know existed.

And on occasion I pushed a lawnmower wearing either steel toes or steel toe leather boots.

When I was seventeen my summer job responsibilities increased:

I learned to manage people

I learned to manage projects

I learned to manage myself

I developed respect and people skills

I fixed “stuff” using wrenches, screw drivers, pliers, pipe wrenches from a golf course mechanic.

I learned how to program a rudimentary automatic irrigation system

I installed irrigation components

I became better a digging and filling holes

I learned about fertilization and plant nutrition

I learned how to trim trees

I hauled brush

I spent the day doing projects with a lifelong group of friends

I learned to appreciate the finished product

I mixed concrete and set posts

I hand weeded gardens

On occasion I pushed a lawnmower and began to learn the operation of larger mowing equipment.

I woke up early, worked hard outside in fresh air, saved money for college and at the end of the summer discovered that I was good at what I was doing.

One year later I began my studies at the University of Minnesota College of Agriculture specializing in Horticulture with a focus on turfgrass management.

Who would have thought that a sixteen year old kid could get a taste for and fall in love with an admirable profession.

Economically he Minnesota Golf Industry generates over $2.3 billion dollars in direct and indirect dollars each year. And annually the Minnesota Golf Industry employees over 25,000 individuals. We need young people to help support the industry through the summer growing months.

The equipment used in professional turf management has built-in safety features that almost make injury impossible. And, professional turf managers value their employee’s safety and have a wide range of instructional materials available to share when educating their staff about proper equipment operation.

Allowing kids to work in the professional turf management industry isn’t just about people operating equipment. It is about learning the nuances of life through experiences.

Please support SF 1805 to clarify the that 16 and 17 year old young adults can operate lawn mowers. And require the Commissioner to amend MN rules to clarify the language.