

# Blue Pearl '97

BY SHELLY FOY

*USGA Green Section, Florida Region*

In their four years of hosting the Blue Pearl Tournament at Loblolly Pines Golf Club in Hobe Sound, members of the Treasure Coast Golf Course Superintendents Association have put more than \$45,000 back into their communities.

The first year, they gave \$10,000 to the Treasure Coast Wildlife Hospital. In the past three years, funds raised by the Blue Pearl Tournament have been donated to the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Schools. From adopting schools into the program, to buying books for libraries, to funding environmental projects at local schools, to even serving on school committees, the TCGCSA is making a difference for environmental education in schools.

The association's goal is to create a String of Pearls across the country by challenging other superintendent chapters to host Blue Pearl Tournaments to raise money for schools. They are well on the way, with several chapters across the country now planning Blue Pearls.

Blue Pearl 97 had some special guests in town for two days of events:



*Third Annual Helicopter Hole-In-One sponsored by the Hobe Sound Women's Club. Helicopter donated by Greg Norman drops numbered golf balls purchased by participants. Closest to the pin wins! Photos by Shelly Foy.*

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- Ken Mangum, director of golf and grounds, Atlanta Athletic Club and a member of the GCSAA Board of Directors;
- Rod McWhirter, national specifications manager, Rain Bird Golf Irrigation;
- Lee Mangum, manager, Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System, Audubon International;
- Kristi Frey, marketing specialist, GCSAA;
- Teri Harris, director of communications, GCSAA;
- Jeffrey Litrenta, writer/producer, EPIC of Wisconsin, Inc.;

GCSAA, in partnership with Rain Bird, are sponsors of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary School Program. The dignitaries were in town to see for themselves what has been going on in the Treasure Coast with superintendents and schools. They interviewed at least 17



TCGCSA President Dick Gray presents a \$12,000 check from the '97 Blue Pearl to Audubon International for its School Program. Photo by Shelly Foy.

people, and got lots of footage from the Blue Pearl for an upcoming Par for the Course show on June 21st.

During the two days of events, the special guests took a tour of the first fully certified Audubon School Sanctuary, Hobe Sound Elementary. It was a good opportunity for them to see first hand how schools and superintendents work together on environmental education projects.

Then, Rob Kloska, GCS, and his staff at the Jupiter Island Club hosted 31 fifth graders from Hobe Sound Elementary and guests for a tour of the golf course. The tour also tied in with Career Week at the school. The students had the opportunity to meet various other staff members, such as the assistant superintendent, mechanic, irrigation technician, and general manager. Highlights from the golf course tour:

Soap Flush for mole crickets — the boys loved it, so did most of the girls .

Computerized Irrigation — Rob explained how the system worked, then demonstrated by having the kids watch No.18 fairway while he programmed the system to come on via radio.

Excitement was evident on the kids' faces when discussing wildlife, particularly when they saw the incubator for the ducks.

There were several good questions from students on equipment washdown, pesticide storage, and even an interesting discussion of a reverse osmosis plant Jupiter Island plans to build.

My favorite comments about the field trip:

"In my 20-something years of teaching, this is the most informative field trip I have ever taken a group of kids on." Sandy Pisano, 5th grade teacher

"This is the first time I've ever been on a field trip where they gave us a soda!" David Hebb, 5th grader

On Friday evening, the TCGCSA hosted a casual dinner for 50 at the Jupiter Island Beach Club. Guests, superintendents, teachers, school administrators and kids were all on hand for a lovely dinner outside, with the ocean as our backdrop and osprey flying overhead.

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EPIC Productions was on hand to film interviews with those involved in the Blue Pearl Tournament and the Audubon School Program.

The Blue Pearl 97 tournament was a huge success. The tournament field was sold out a couple of weeks before the event. A total of 144 golfers tested their skills against Loblolly Pines Golf Club and Fred Hinkle's challenging hole locations. For this four-man scramble, winning scores of 53 and 54.5 were posted in the gross and net divisions.

I have had the pleasure of working directly with the TCGCSA and the Blue Pearl Tournament for the past three years. What they have accomplished, working with local schools and the Audubon School Program, is a wonderful model for all superintendent chapters across the country.

"Being involved in the Blue Pearl tournament is truly a rewarding experience," says Bill Lanthier, CGCS, Mariner Sands Country Club. "It is an opportunity to be active in your community and help children learn more about their environment."

Current TCGCSA President Dick Gray says, "Have you ever seen a picture of this planet taken from a satellite? It looks like a blue pearl floating in a sea of black. One of our chores is to polish the pearl. Clean it up, restore it. We are hosts; we are guests; we are company, and we need to behave accordingly."



(Back to front) GCSAA Director Ken Mangum, CGCS; Lee Mangum, Audubon International; and Rod McWhirter, Rain Bird, Inc. help a kindergarden class plant a butterfly garden during a tour of the Hobe Sound Elementary School. Photo by Shelly Foy.

The TCGCSA has published *The Blue Pearl Primer*, a three-page document describing the Blue Pearl Tournament and its philosophy. The members encourage every chapter to get involved with the

Audubon School Program and host a Blue Pearl of their own to raise money for local schools. For a copy of this document, call Bill Lanthier at 561-283-3644.



Rob Kloska, center, demonstrates his computere-controlled irrigation system to a group of fifth graders during a tour of the Jupiter Island Golf Club as part of the Blue Pearl weekend activities. Photo by Shelly Foy