

After 18 months of working as your director of communications, I haven't reached a lot of conclusions, but I do have a greater appreciation for the pieces of the puzzle that make up the golf industry in Florida.

I have covered our traditional FGCSA educational sessions and fund-raising events. I have participated in government-relations working groups like FQPA, Pesticide Review Council, and Pesticide Poisoning Surveillance. I have attended the golf-media-based International Network of Golf Conference. I am

serving on committees for GCSAA Publications and FTGA Conference and Show. I am a board member of the Florida Golf Alliance and the Agricultural Institute of Florida. I am writing for four golf publications in addition to *The Florida Green* and *The Greensheet*. I am not retired!

I have learned that at many of those activities, turfgrass in

general has not been a very active player, and my presence in your behalf has been welcome. Remember, however, that all politics is local and I can't be everywhere. Therefore, local chapters must constantly share the burden of involvement on issues and then share that information statewide.

In many arenas superintendents have become advocates for issues that go beyond their job descriptions and I would really like to see owners and managers pick up some of that slack. Superintendents are employees and sometimes they jeopardize their "day job" as they tackle community and association service issues. Owners and managers in partnership with superintendents should take more of a lead in fighting water resource and other environmental issues. Superintendents have the expertise, but owners and managers often have more influential contacts on a daily basis.

It was interesting to attend the ING conference in Daytona last May where I rubbed elbows with golf media, golf equipment manufacturers, marketing reps and other golf-related businesses. There is a whole world of

golf out there that has only a fleeting interest in what we deem to be critical issues. While superintendents are acknowledged as playing an important role in conditioning golf courses, these folks are busy attracting players to the game and outfitting them with the longest distance golf ball, the "can't miss" golf club, and the latest training aid that will improve their swings. It would be nice if somehow a fraction the millions of dollars spent on greens fees, equipment and golf travel each year could find its way to turf research.

Finally, it seems that apathy keeps rearing its ugly head as far as participation at local chapter meetings is concerned. No one seems to know why more superintendents can't make it to the meetings in greater numbers. Associations are run by those who show up! You don't have to spend the whole day. Just attend the business meeting and educational session. Chapters have tried having meetings in the morning, afternoon and night. Some chapters have even picked up the tab for the meeting so it doesn't cost the member anything.

Chapter leaders want to know, "What is the problem?" Are people job scared or just lazy? Ever notice how the numbers do go up when the meeting is held at a new upscale golf course? Do they have a bone to pick with the chapter leadership or education programs? If you only want to be a "checkbook member," don't complain or criticize.

Maybe the pool of truly professional superintendents is shrinking. Maybe the new generation either knows it all or doesn't know enough. Maybe they haven't established good working relationships with their owners and managers, and they just work hard and endure. Maybe they lack the confidence and ability to run a good program that will let them take off for a few hours once a month to get involved in their association that seeks to make them professionally and personally better.

The golf industry is a big puzzle and there are a lot of ways to look at it. Our piece of the puzzle holds the key to a lot of solutions to problems that affect the whole picture. Make a commitment to be an active partner in putting the puzzle together.

Putting The Puzzle Together

Green Side Up



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