Is turfgrass research important to you? Does the game of golf and your chosen profession mean enough to you to want to help find ways to make it more efficient and affordable, safer and more enjoyable, and less damaging to the environment?

Do you like living on the edge, or would you like new grasses, products, and practices developed that might help you to meet the extreme demands of your membership and increase your job security?

These questions are meant to be rhetorical, but the facts prove their validity. In 1997, only 27 golf clubs made contributions to the Envirotron or the FTGA Research Foundation. With 1998 nearly over, that number has dropped to 20. Contributions to the GCSAA's "Investing in the Beauty of Golf" Program so far are overwhelmingly corporate — superintendent participation is less than 2 percent of our membership.

Our suppliers continue to bear the burden of supporting our research needs, while few of us earning our living in the golf industry make personal contributions, and those who benefit most — golfers — do virtually nothing except by the indirect costs passed on by our suppliers.

Those of us who serve our superintendent and turfgrass associations in Florida have scratched our heads for years trying to develop fund-raising methods able to meet our research needs. Our efforts have had some success — we have raised, on average, about $150,000 per year as opposed to the $30,000 a year back in the 70s and early 80s — but this increase has largely been offset by university budget cuts over the same period. The majority of this increase, again, has mainly come from our suppliers.

The ball game changed just as we became real players, and like it or not, this is how it will be played from now on, whether it be the University

## Small Gifts Make a Big Difference

### Mark My Words



Mark Jarrell, CGCS
Vice President
FTGA

of Florida or any other university. Each research faculty position costs the university between $180,000 and $250,000, and if we want them to do a research project, we have to pay for it. The University of Florida reports that it spent a total of $1,985,556 on turf in 1997, committing 12.15 full time faculty equivalents working on 27 separate projects. Only $109,273 of that nearly $2 million came from industry.

Now we are once again faced with declining donations, just at the time we have finally gotten a turf coordinator in place and increased inputs and commitments to the turfgrass program from the UF IFAS administration. Some of our suppliers are questioning the value of their donations and are reducing their level of support, if not eliminating it altogether. This is the very time we all need to step up to the plate and help move our program forward, now that we have some momentum.

The FTGA now has Don Benham, director of public relations, in place to help with fund raising. There are several new fund-raising ideas being developed, such as an "initiative" to take to the Florida Legislature, a celebrity golf tournament, club assessments of $2 per member per year, and the identification and solicitation of potential large contributors. The turfgrass certification program has begun to bring in a few dollars. Through Roy Bates and Ron Garl, we hope the new Florida Golf Alliance will bring in new research dollars.

These ideas may one day become reality and develop funding sources adequate to our needs, but in the meantime, donations are needed to allow us to fund our researchers and prove we are a viable and committed industry that can "partner" with our university turfgrass program.

I urge you to think seriously about your future and the industry you work in. If every golf club in Florida would donate just $250 per year, we would have all the research funding we need. Don't leave everything up to your organizations and the volunteers who serve them! We're all in this together and it isn't fair for you to reap the benefits without contributing to the cause. Write that check today to your local chapter, the FGCSA, or the FTGA Research Foundation in support of turfgrass research!