

EGCSA PRESIDENTS AWARD

Volunteer Habit Earns Top Honor For Roy Bates

Back in Milford, Mich. in the mid-50s, Mary Bates knew something was different about her young son. When Little Roy spoke his very first word, it was not the normal "momma" or "dada"; instead he simply said, "volunteer." She started thinking, "What does this mean?" Well, ever since that big day she surely found out.



Super volunteer Roy Bates, right, shown with architect Ron Garl as they formed the Florida Golf Alliance in 1998. Photo by Joel Jackson.

Bates got his early exposure to golf courses by growing up next to Highland Hills CC in Milford. One Saturday when Roy was about 12 years old, the starter left his job. Roy, who was just hanging out perfecting his putting skills, volunteered to do the job for the day. Highland Hills liked his enthusiasm and offered him the job whenever he could work after school and on the weekends. This job was his until he graduated high school.

With his love for the outdoors Bates worked seven years with a landscape company, before moving to Florida. He thought he was oh-so-clever, studying up on Florida before he made the big move. He actually thought the mocking bird was our state bird instead of the mosquito. Well, after stocking up with repellent, he found employment on the crew at Imperial CC. Shortly after this he met his wife-to-be, Mary. She thought this strapping (and then slender) man would be just perfect and soon they were married. Soon after wedlock, Mary decided to have their first child. Once again Roy volunteered and Kristin was born.

After four years of working his way up the crew at Imperial, Jerry Redden asked Bates if he would be willing to move up to assistant

superintendent; once again Roy volunteered. Shortly after becoming the assistant, Redden asked Bates if he would get involved with some committees for the Florida Turfgrass Association and, of course, Roy volunteered.

After four years of honing his skills under Redden, Cypress Lake Country Club called and asked whether Bates would be willing to be their superintendent. About this time Mary tapped Roy on the shoulder and thought it would be a great time for another child. Roy volunteered again and Kathryn was born.

After a couple of years at Cypress Lake, Bates was asked to run 36 holes at Quail Creek. This lasted one year when Imperial called, this time wanting Bates to run the 36 holes as superintendent. He stayed there 11 years, meanwhile getting involved in FTGA and the Everglades GCSA.

He volunteered to the board of FTGA from 1990 until becoming president in 1996. After slowing down a little bit in 1997 he became president of the Everglades in 1998 and vice president of the newly formed Golf Alliance in the same year.

As you can tell Bates is a firm believer in giving back to the industry he serves, and like many who have given back, he wishes more people would get involved. "The

more you know about things ready to happen in this industry, the better prepared we all will be," says Roy.

Bates now works for WCI Communities, which has developed 30 communities with 522 golf holes and more than a thousand marina slips in southwest Florida. WCI has pledged the necessary funds to the FTGA for UF/IFAS agricultural economists, Dr. Alan Hodges and Dr. John Haydu, to conduct a Florida golf economic impact study. This study builds on the 1992 Turfgrass Economic Impact study also funded by the FTGA, but focuses only on golf, including the game and its ramifications not just the turf aspect.

When David Fry, senior vice president of amenities, needed some one to head the project and to solicit money from other developers to help pay for it, guess who volunteered for the job? You guessed it.

Some people get awards because of years spent in associations, but few have made as many friends along the way as Roy has. He has truly been an inspiration with his constant positive attitude. It has been a great pleasure to know Roy for the past 15 years, he has gotten me involved and made me a better person, and I am sure he has done the same for many others.

Bates blames most of this obsessive volunteering on his mentor Jerry Redden, but personally I think it

goes back to that very first word he spoke some 48 years ago, "volunteer."

The Everglades chapter spoke the words "Thank You" loud and clear to Roy Bates in September when it presented him with the 2001 FGCSA President's Award for Lifetime Service.

Glenn Zakany

LCCC ALUMNI

10th Annual Event Raises \$13,500 for Lake City CC

The Lake City Community College's Golf Course Operations Alumni group based primarily in the Everglades Chapter area pulled off its 10th Annual Endowment Fund-Raiser without a hitch Jan. 4 at WCI Communities' Colony Club. Outgoing committee cochairman Glenn Zakany reported that the event has raised more than \$100,000 since its inception and the 2002 event netted a check for \$13,500. Department Chairman John Piersol was on hand from the school to thank everyone for their support and urged the alumni and others to help support the LCCC program that produces future superintendents and equipment technicians for the industry.

This year while the committee scored the event, Chuck "The



Chuck "The Hitman" Hitter doing just one of his amazing trick shots to entertain the crowd during the barbeque dinner following golf. Photo by Joel Jackson.