

EDUCATION!

My friends tell me that on occasion I sound like I'm preaching, because once I get stuck on an issue, I have a hard time letting it go. Well, my 'thing' for this article is outreach and education and the benefits to you when you do this correctly.

By Shelly Foy

Education.

It is an exciting time when our children start school. They start learning all kinds of interesting things; how to read and how to write their names, how to stay in a straight line, and how to tie their shoes. They also come home and repeat things they have learned at school like, "a baked Alaska is a cake with a fire in the middle of it," or "Mommy, do you know what the capital of Georgia is?" The answer is Athens, home of the Georgia Bulldogs, right? They have a thirst for knowledge, and it is very rewarding to watch it happening every day.

Education — we all got it, we all use it, and most importantly we all need to keep getting it. Fortunately, life is an ongoing education process. We learn by doing, by seeing, by reading, by watching and by listening. Some of us even still learn from our mistakes, and this is also a good thing.

I think that the most important part of the ACSP for Golf Courses is Outreach and

Education. Yet, this is the most overlooked, ignored, and put-off aspect of this program for almost every person who is working toward certification. Or worse, you do a couple of things just to get you through the certification process, and then you never think about education again. You are not getting the full benefit of the Audubon program if you are not taking outreach and education seriously and if you are not making them a regular part of your program.

You let your golfers know before you aerify because you don't want to have everyone complaining about you tearing up the golf course. Ideally you want them to understand that aerification is a basic part of golf course management and that if they want to have healthy turf, then they are going to have to put up with it from time to time. You hope that once they become educated about aerification they are not going to give you any more grief about it, and better yet, they are going to explain it to other golfers. You have benefited from sharing a little education with your members.

The same principle is true for the envi-

ronmental programs on your golf course. You want to share this information so that the golfers will in turn share the information. Maybe one day when golf courses are getting slammed as being bad for the environment, lo and behold one of your very own golfers will take the stand that golf courses are good for the environment. They know this because their golf course superintendent took the time to educate them and share information with them. Hey, it could happen. More importantly, it needs to happen.

Forget about the ACSP for a minute.

Regardless of whether you are participating in this program (although I think you are crazy not to be), there are lots of reasons to tell your golfers how many different ways golf courses are good for the environment. The perfect example came to me when I was reading Joel Jackson's article "Responsibility Lacking, Not H-2-O" in the April 2005 issue of *Golfdom* Magazine.

He wrote, "According to a recent Golf Economic Impact study, there are 4 million acres of lawn turf and 140,000 acres of irrigated golf turf in Florida. The public sector uses 30% of the water; golf uses 3.5%. Agriculture (the biggest user of water) and golf (one of the smallest) still get hammered in the press, even though both manage and recycle water better than John Q. Public."

I believe that most of you knew that already, but answer this question truthfully: How many of you have shared that information with your golfers?

Here is another perfect example: Most of you know the information in the gray box elsewhere on this page, but have you shared it with anyone?

There is factual, unbiased university research to support each one of the above golf-course benefits. Got any idea how simple it would be to take one or two topics at a time and put a paragraph about them in your club newsletter or on the course Web site, or pin it up in the locker room?

The beauty of this is that the information is already written and out there, and all you have to do is reprint it. Who has time to reinvent the wheel these days? It is up to you to help educate golfers, and it takes very little effort on your part.

How do you communicate with your golfers? Post information, either on the course or in the clubhouse. Write monthly articles for your club newsletter. Speak to your golfers personally while you are out on the golf course. Is this enough?

Here are some simple ideas on ways to communicate effectively with your golfers.

- Take advantage of your club's Web site and newsletter. Writing a monthly or even quarterly article may seem daunting. Don't reinvent the wheel. The USGA, GCSAA, Audubon International and others have Web sites where you can download tons of information and reprint it. Just give credit to the folks you borrow it from and that is that.

The golf course ecosystem:

- Provides wildlife habitat
- Protects topsoil from water and wind erosion
- Improves community aesthetics
- Absorbs and filters rain
- Improves health and reduces stress for more than 25 million golfers
- Improves air quality
- Captures and cleanses runoff in urban areas
- Discourages pests (e.g. ticks and mosquitoes)
- Restores damaged land areas (e.g., former landfill or mining sites)
- Makes substantial contributions to the community's economy
- Converts carbon dioxide to oxygen
- Improves property values
- Can act as a firebreak
- Is often the only significant green space in an urban environment
- Lowers temperatures
- Filters dust and pollen in the air

- Craig Weyandt does a great job with his "Wild at Heart" column in his club's newsletter at The Moorings in Vero Beach. He picks one wildlife species that lives on his golf course and writes a few paragraphs about its life cycle, what it eats, its benefits to the environment, etc... and he includes a picture. Craig would be the first to tell you that the information is easily accessible from a variety of books and Web sites.

Consumer Golf Show Pays Off

On March 19 and 20, the MetGCSA sponsored a booth at the Journal News Golf Show in White Plains N.Y. The weather was a perfect spring day. When I arrived, there were 600 or so people waiting at the door for the 10 a.m. opening. By the end of the day more than 1,350 tickets had been sold. The show featured more than 75 different golf exhibits. Everything from area courses selling memberships, to the gentleman selling hand-rolled cigars.

We borrowed a display from Audubon International. If you wanted a good laugh you should have been there when I put it up. I must say though, that after all was said and done, the booth looked pretty sharp. Audubon also donated a golf print of Pebble Beach. In order to be eligible to win the print golfers had to fill out a quick questionnaire (*See facing page*). We collected more than 60 surveys. The responses were very positive. Most golfers do view their courses as being good for the environment and would be willing to travel further and pay a little more for golf courses that have demonstrated good environmental stewardship. We also had rule books to give out complements of the USGA.

and literature from GCSAA and our local *Tee to Green* publication.

The show generated a lot of interest. We answered a wide variety of questions from goose control to organic fertilizers. Tim Moore said he spoke with a reporter from a golf magazine with the possibility of writing some articles. It's that kind of networking that can become invaluable.

I would like to thank the people who helped man the booth. Chuck Denny, Glenn Perry, Glenn Dube, Tim Moore, Blake Halderman, Peter Waterous, and my daughter Megan. I would also like to thank Dave Oatis from the USGA for the *Rules of Golf* books and literature, Shelly Howard from the GCSAA, and JoEllen Zeh from Audubon International for letting us borrow her display.

In closing I think the show went quite well. We were able to pass out a lot of good information. It was a great place to stand on a pedestal and tell the golfing world what we do and how we do it and that golf courses are good for the environment.

Matthew Ceplo CGCS

- Pet Peeve: Don't put your ACSP prints, certification certificates, etc on the wall in the maintenance facility! How many of your golfers make it down to your office to check this out? Display these things in a more public area. You worked hard for your ACSP certifications. Share them with more people other than your maintenance staff.

- Host a "Wild" photography contest. Get with club officials and come up with some prizes, categories and basic, easy rules. Write a little information. Post it on the website in your newsletter, the locker rooms, the clubhouse, the pro shop, etc. Display all the entries and make a party of it one night. Let your members/golfers vote on winners, and just make it fun. One of the basic simple rules should be that the photographs are taken on the property. You are getting the management involved and your golfers/members involved in the project, and you are highlighting the environmental assets of your property.

- Displays can be scary. However, and this is my secret tip of the day: If you hate doing displays, give that job to someone else. If I were the boss and if I were charming enough, I could find someone who would love to do this. Now, I have seen displays of all kinds and styles; big budgets with built-in cabinets, all the way to poster boards. You know your golfers/members. What will attract their attention? Make it really nice, or make it simple. Just find a place in the clubhouse to display it.

- Lots of folks have created some nifty brochures of all kinds. From information sheets on a particular subject such as wetlands preservation that are posted around the clubhouse, to brochures that describe the club's involvement in the ACSP and the projects they have implemented or are planning, to beautiful topographies of native vegetation, to laminated sheets that list why golf courses are good for the environment.

There are some pretty creative folks out there. I have to say that some of my all-time favorite Florida-specific brochures have come from David Bailey at Turnberry Isle Resort & Club. David is an incredible photographer and the club has utilized his talent in creating some very nice color brochures that depict plant and wildlife species that can be found on the course. One is called "Golf Course Residents" and has descriptions of more than 35 of the most common birds found on the course, as well as some spectacular photos from David. The other is a "Botanical Tour" of the property that not only lists plant materials, but has great photos as well, and even Trivia/Facts from the Landscaping Department.

Win a \$200 Golf Art Print!!!

2004 Golf & Environment Survey

Audubon International is working with golf organizations such as the United States Golf Association and the PGA of America to learn more about golfers' perspectives on golf and the environment across the United States. Please take a few minutes to complete the following survey. Each completed survey will be entered into a drawing for a golf art print, valued at \$200. You may enter only once, and the winner will be notified by November 30, 2004.

1. How often do you golf each year (circle one)? *Over 25 times/year* *8-14 times/year* *Less than 8 times/year*
2. What type of golf courses do you play at primarily (circle one)?

<i>Daily Fee</i>	<i>Private/Club</i>	<i>Municipal</i>	<i>Resort</i>	<i>Other:</i> _____
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3. Do you feel that it's important to protect the natural environment (circle one)? *Yes* *No*
4. Do you belong to any local, state, or national conservation or environmental groups?
Yes *No* *If Yes, which groups:* _____
5. What type of effect do you believe golf courses have on the natural environment?
Negative/Harmful *Positive/Beneficial* *No Effect Either Way*
6. Would you pay more to play at a golf course that had been certified as "eco-friendly"? *Yes* *No*
7. Have you ever heard of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses?
Yes *No* *If Yes, where?:* _____
8. Are you aware of ever playing at a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary golf course?
Yes *No* *If Yes, where?:* _____
9. Would you ever seek out certified, environmentally-friendly golf courses in order to play them? *Yes* *No*
10. Would you want the course(s) where you play enrolled in a voluntary environmental program and working to reduce the environmental impacts of its day-to-day operations (chemical use, water use, etc.)?
Yes *No* *Don't Care*
11. Would you ever consider joining a national group of golfers interested in protecting the natural environment?
Yes *No* *If Yes, what fee would you pay to join?:* _____

Thank you for your participation. To be entered into the drawing for the golf art print (valued at \$200), please provide the following contact information:

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Phone (optional): _____
Email (optional): _____

Audubon International, 46 Rarick Road, Selkirk, NY 12158
Phone: (518)767-9051 • Fax: (518)767-9076 • Email: audubon@audubonintl.org

Survey used by Metropolitan GCSA. See Consumer Golf article page 50.

- WCI's Raptor Bay Golf Club in Bonita Springs also has a spectacular yardage book that has tons of information about the golf course, as well as great pictures. However, on each page they also list environmental facts about the golf course or environmental projects to notice on a particular hole.

- An easy way to get some buy-in with environmental programs is to enlist the help of your golfers in creating a wildlife inventory. This can be done in several ways. One simple way is to just have a book in the clubhouse where golfers

can list wildlife sightings. Tip: Make it a nice book, not a spiral-bound \$1 version from the local discount store.

- Several golf courses have created some very nice information cards that can go right on the golf cart. The famous "Have you seen me today" card from Kapalua has pictures of birds, and all golfers are asked to do is circle the ones they see while they are out playing golf. These information cards are inexpensive ways to get member involvement. Remember, there is a chance that once they actually take their eyes off

the golf ball and look around the golf course, they just might actually get into the wildlife you have and start noticing some of the other great environmental benefits of golf courses as well.

- A lot of you are now including “wildlife tours” in your seasonal programs. There are folks from local Audubon chapters, or retired ornithologists like George McBath in Naples, who will come out to the golf course and lead your members/golfers on tours. Craig Weyandt at the Moorings Club in Vero Beach leads his own tours. He just wrote an article about this in the last issue of the Florida Green, so dig it out, go back and re-read it. Matt Taylor at Royal Poinciana has George McBath come out and do “grandchildren tours”. After the tour they give each child a bag filled with goodies. Closest way to a grandparent’s heart? Through their grandchildren.

- Some people have school groups

come and tour the golf course. Let me just say for any of you out there who may be confused on this matter, you are not required to have kids on your golf course in order to achieve certification in Outreach and Education through the ACSP. I am truly amazed at how many of you still believe this and how many of you use this as an excuse to not get involved in the program.

Don’t get me wrong, it is wonderful to educate children about the environmental benefits of golf courses, and if you can bring them out to the golf course, please do so. Ever heard of the trickle-down effect? Kids hear something at school; come home and tell mom and dad, grandma, the neighbors, the family dog, etc. However, in a lot of situations, you are better off in my opinion, spending the time educating your own golfers/members.

I heard through the grapevine that the

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owner of the Indian River Club in Vero Beach loves to have school tours at his club, and has even offered \$100 to the school that spots a bald eagle during their tour.

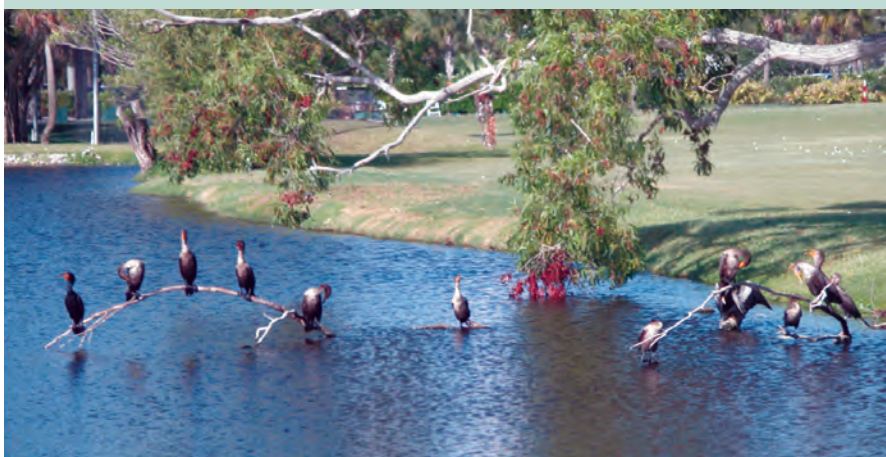
These are just a few ideas of outreach and education ideas going on around the state. One last thing I would like to share with you as a potential chapter or state project is something that the MetGCSA in New York did in 2004. They borrowed a display from Joellen Zeh at Audubon International and took it to a local golf show.

Several of their superintendents manned the booth during this educational show and took turns telling the golfing world what it is they do, how they do it and explaining why golf courses are good for the environment. They also had Audubon donate an art print, and everyone who took the time to fill out a one-page survey had a chance to win the print. Please see the survey reprinted in the Stewardship section. They collected more than 60 surveys that day and learned that golfers do view their golf courses as being good for the environment and that they would be willing to travel further and pay a little more for golf courses that demonstrated good environmental stewardship.

Hopefully I have convinced some of you to take a closer look at your outreach and education philosophies and make some changes that will benefit everyone. There are a handful who are doing an incredible job on this topic, and there are those who think they are doing a good job, and unfortunately there are many who aren’t doing much at all.

So you may agree with my friends who tell me that I “preach” too much, but trust me, all this is for your own good, as well as for the good of your industry.

ACSS Update



New Florida Members

- Country Club at Boca Raton**, Randy Bushway, Palm Beach GCSA
- Doral Golf Resort & Spa**, Eric VonHofen, South Florida GCSA
- Kelly Greens G&CC**, Anthony Dumas, Ft. Myers
- Links at Greenfield Plantation**, Mark Todd, Bradenton
- Okeehoelee GC**, Jim Witt, CGCS, West Palm Beach
- Tampa Palms G&CC**, Bill Kistler, West Coast GCSA
- Wycliffe G&CC**, Steve Tilley, Palm Beach GCSA

New Florida Certifications

- Old Marsh** – Recertified
- Brooksville CC at Majestic Oaks** – Recertified
- Copperleaf GC** – Environmental Planning
- WCI - Club Renaissance at Sun City Center** – Environmental Planning
- The Jupiter Ritz Carlton Golf Club & Spa** – Environmental Planning, Resource Conservation and Water Quality Management

