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# The FLORIDA Green

SPRING 2017



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Keep Balance in Your Day With Family and Friends

Yep, another Golf Industry Show has come and gone. From a personal and professional point of view, I had a great time at GIS. It was very busy and the Florida GCSA reception was a blast.

I must admit it was a little nerve-wracking speaking at the opening night reception in front of a huge crowd. Still it was a very rewarding experience. I only had a few words to say which made my night very easy. David Dore-Smith is the real champ here. He had a full two-minute speech which he pulled off without a problem. It was great to hear people enjoying the welcome video we put together. I hope you've all been able to see it by now.

During GIS, and since, we have been busy filming for a series of videos from environmental stewardship to promoting membership. These will be important tools for the association and the profession. I've said it before and will continue to say it, get involved with your association in some capacity. Attend a meeting. Volunteer for a committee. Support your local BMP class when it comes to your neck of the woods. Have your assistants and spray tech take the class and test too.

Congratulations to Darren Davis, CGCS on being elected vice-president of GCSAA and congratulations to Rafael Barajas, CGCS being elected secretary-treasurer. Kevin Sunderman was also appointed as a director. That's a great 'southern comfort' line up if I've ever seen one. Good luck guys. We're all proud and grateful for all you do.

By the time you're reading this most, if not all, of your members have fled back north. Now comes the busiest time of year as far as our workload goes. Aerification, verticutting, heavy top dressing, slicing, you name it. We'll be out there making the most of just about any cultural practice to improve our courses for our golfers.

At Miami Beach Golf Club, we are a high-end public course so spring through summer also counts as our busiest time of year in terms of play. Our rates are slashed from \$225 to \$35 if you have a premier card. Thank goodness we have carts with GPS that are programmed to keep most people from driving on greens and tee slopes.

Still, I expect we will be fighting the dreaded Zika virus again this year. Unfortunately the virus did keep a lot of people away from the golf course last summer and even into the fall. So this winter we did some drainage work to limit standing water. We're also building bird houses to attract allies in helping keep the mosquito numbers down. It's important we do all we can so that our summer members and golfers don't leave for a mosquito free zone to get their golf.

Zika is a problem we could all do without but no matter which course you're at or where, we all know as superintendents that we are going to face hurdles at some point. Part of being a good superintendent is doing all we can to minimize the chance of things going wrong and all we can to maximize our ability to recover when they do. Preparation gives us the best chance of limiting any impact and communication is critical when something does happen.

In closing, we all know that spring and summer are very tough. The hours are long and sometimes tempers can be short. It can seem like every day is a Monday (the day when everything goes wrong). Through it all, please remember you have a family at home that can't wait to see you and talk to you and have dinner and, if there is time, play a little. Balance your day with family and friends. Before you know it the days will be getting shorter and the weather a little cooler.

Good luck this spring and summer everyone. ■



Florida GCSA president Ricky Reeves welcomes colleagues from across the country and overseas to the 2017 Golf Industry Show in Orlando.



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Please support these businesses that do so much for golf and golf course superintendents in Florida.

## Time for a Little Housekeeping: Update Your Profile, Please



Jennifer Bryan

A year ago, we launched the new and improved Florida GCSA website. The new design has enabled us to take advantage of new technology and use the most current tools to maintain an accurate database, provide relevant information and offer on-line event registration and payments in one location.

It has also provided us with a new tool to communicate about chapter events, news and advocacy in an effective manner. As we enter the membership renewal season, I want to highlight a few things that will make this process even easier.

Beginning in May, renewal invoices will be emailed and mailed to all members. Dues invoices will be generated automatically using your 2016-2017 membership

preferences indicated in our database. For example, if you were a member of the North Florida and Seven Rivers chapters, both chapters will be on your invoice. If you donated to the Florida GCSA research fund, that item will also be on your invoice.

However, if you want to make changes to your current membership; change your chapter(s), add or remove a research contribution, you will just need to send a quick email to the Florida GCSA office at fgcsa@comcast.net and that change will be made.

Employment changes, phone number changes, email updates, etc, can all be changed by you, the member. Every member has a unique username and password. If you have forgotten yours or do not know it, please contact the Florida GCSA office. The information is readily available and will be emailed to you as quickly as possible. It is very important that we have your updated information.

Affiliate members – you will need to pay special attention to your invoices. In the case of affiliate members that are members of more than one chapter, or purchase a chapter membership level that includes additional memberships, the individual who paid the membership in the 2016-2017 membership year will be sent the new 2017-2018 membership dues invoice. If membership names need to change or be added, please contact the Florida GCSA office with a quick email. Those changes will be easy and addressed quickly.

All members will receive an automatic email confirmation when their dues payments are received. This applies to both credit card and check payments. If your invoice is misplaced, you can access a copy in your member profile.

Here are just a few of the things that you can find under your Member Profile:

- Invoices
- Event Registrations
- Professional Development – BMP Certification scores and Certification Date
- Blogs
- Photo Gallery
- Resume and Career Posting

I hope you will take some time to check out our new website if you have not already. Remember to keep an eye out for a renewal invoice in May. They will come via e-mail and postal service. I am looking forward to a smooth transition into our 2017-2018 membership year and appreciate your assistance in this effort.

Remember, the website is your tool to Get Connected, Get Organized and Get Social. Jump in! ■

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— South Florida GCSA —

# 29th Annual Otto Schmeisser Turfgrass Industry Exposition

## Thank You to Our Sponsors

The South Florida GCSA greatly appreciates the generous support of the following companies that helped make such a success of this year's South Florida Turf Expo and Turfgrass Research Field Day at the University of Florida and Institute of Food and Agricultural Services in Davie.

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## SUNCOAST



Members of the victorious Suncoast GCSA after beating their rivals from the Calusa GCSA.

Thanks to even stronger vendor support than usual, this year's Suncoast Scramble in May raised right around \$50,000, about a 20 percent increase on recent years. While expenses still have to be accounted for, we are delighted with the outcome that helps put us on a strong footing for the year ahead. We are very grateful to those companies and individuals that supported the event so generously.

We had 116 golfers tee it up at Plantation Golf and Country Club in Venice where Jay Mullen was host superintendent. The day began with our annual business meeting and between 50 and 60 members were present to help take care of our elections and bylaws amendments. Congratulations to Dan Haubein from Pelican Pointe Golf and Country Club in Venice who was voted in as new president.

After the business meeting Jason Straka of Fry-Straka Global Golf Design

spoke about taking a team approach to renovation. Jason knows his stuff and did a great job sharing a lot of valuable information. We also committed some funds to deserving causes including \$3,000 to the Florida GCSA turfgrass research fund and \$1,000 to the Ronald McDonald House. We gave a further \$500 each to The First Tee of Sarasota Manatee and All Faiths Food Bank.

I'm also proud to report that the Suncoast GCSA took care of business in our annual Ryder Cup style challenge against the Calusa GCSA earlier in the year. We reclaimed the trophy by a resounding 11.5 to 4.5 margin from the 16 superintendent matches played at Lemon Bay Golf Club in Englewood. Thanks to Bob Wagner for hosting this great event.

On June 21 we head to Esplanade Golf and Country Club in Lakewood Ranch for our annual member-guest tournament. Rob



Nick Kearns and golf course architect Jason Straka with an award for design excellence on the Heron Course at The Oaks Club.



Doug Cunfare, a member of the winning team from Rosedale Country Club, is congratulated by new Suncoast GCSA president Dan Haubein.

Buege, CGCS will host us for this event which aims to generate new members and re-activate others that may have become inactive for whatever reason. It is a great opportunity to promote our association and all the benefits it delivers.

-Nick Kearns, The Oaks Club.

## SEVEN RIVERS



Left: Andy Jorgensen, CGCS accepts a check for \$25,000 on behalf of the Seven Rivers GCSA from Glen Thompson of Golf Ventures, long-running champion level sponsor of the Envirotron Golf Classic.

Right: Host superintendent Paul Hamilton and staff made sure everyone knew where they were for the Seven Rivers GCSA event at University of Florida's Mark Bostick Golf Course.



The Seven Rivers GCSA had a very warm welcome as we returned to the University of Florida Mark Bostick Golf Course in Gainesville for our December meeting. We had over 60 attendees from across Florida come listen to Dr. Jason Kruse and Dr. Phil Harmon give updates on some ongoing research and the rapid turf diagnostic lab.

Several vendor members stepped up and provided closest to the pin prizes. Host superintendent Paul Hamilton had the course in immaculate condition for the golf outing with nothing but rave reviews from those in attendance.

The next stop for the chapter was to Arlington Ridge in Leesburg for our March meeting. Once again the chapter had a great turnout for this hidden jewel in Central Florida. Our guest speaker was Peter Harvey from Rapid Waste Environmental speaking on proper disposal of expired or unknown pesticides. Peter provided great information and answered several questions in regards to his area of expertise.

There was a bit of a home field advantage as the team of Sam Ellison, Matt Tuck, Drew Kisner and Damien Hillen took home the first place trophy. A big thank you goes out to Janet O'Dell for the excellent course conditions and for hosting a fabulous event.

The 25th annual Jeff Hayden Memorial Envirotron Golf Classic was a huge hit once again this year! A huge thank you goes out to our champion sponsor Golf

Ventures and all additional sponsors, volunteers, committee members and World Woods Golf Club staff. Over 280 players enjoyed awesome conditions courtesy of host superintendent David Court, CGCS and staff.

This year we celebrated the retirement of Glenn Oberlander, tournament chairman for the life of the event. Glenn has been

instrumental in coordinating and planning this event from day one and is responsible for raising over \$1 million for turfgrass research right here in the state of Florida. I think it goes without saying that we could not have done it without Glenn's leadership, support and vision over the years. We wish him many happy years to come as he embarks on this next chapter of life. There is no doubt that Glenn leaves some big shoes to fill.

-Andy Jorgenson, CGCS On Top of the World.

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## EVERGLADES

In January the Everglades GCSA hosted their fourth annual G.C. Horn memorial turfgrass seminar. A large turnout of sponsors and attendees made for a great day. Thank you again to all our great speakers including Dr. Billy Crow, Dr. Adam Dale, Dr. Bryan Unruh and Jeremy Welter all from the University of Florida.

Paul Mitola from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services spoke on upcoming changes in the industry and Dr. John Cisar former UF professor must have been looking into his crystal ball giving a much needed refresher course on wetting agents and water repellency as we soon after headed into a long dry spell.

The G.C. Horn seminar has become annual highlight event for the Everglades GCSA, always hosting a star line-up of presenters covering current important topics for our area. We look forward to next year and for another great day and excellent opportunity to rack up more CEU's.

In March we convened back at Vanderbilt Country Club for a great formal dinner meeting featuring Charlie Rymer, current analyst on the Golf Channel. Superintendent Stuart Bothe and Vanderbilt Country Club were phenomenal hosts. The food and entertainment was a great hit for all attendees as well as their guests and spouses. Making this event into a date night was a new twist for our association



Guest speaker from Golf Channel, Charlie Rymer, with Tom Caliguire from Forest Glen Golf and Country Club and Everglades GCSA president and host at Vanderbilt Country Club Stuart Bothe.

and one we hope to continue in the future.

The 25th annual Everglades Spring Turfgrass Symposium in April was a great success, with a sold out attendance of more than 140 turfgrass professionals. Seven top industry speakers were present for a full day of informative education. One highlight of the day was from speaker Don Rennie Ph.D. from Texas A&M who gave a fast-moving, action packed talk on pesticide safety and education. This was the first time many of us had heard Dr. Rennie speak before but I would not pass a lecture up from him again given the

opportunity. Thank you again to all that attended and spoke.

At press time we were completely booked up for the Poa Annuu Golf Classic and G.C. Horn Memorial Tournament in May. This year we returned to the Naples Beach Hotel and the newly-renovated golf course. Jack Nicklaus and John Sanford collaborated for this project bringing this golf course back to life. We were all looking forward to seeing the changes and a great weekend of camaraderie.

-Tyler Casey, West Bay Golf Club.

## NORTH FLORIDA



Mike Stevens accepts a check for \$5,000 from John Lammrsh to support the Florida GCSA turfgrass research fund.



Ryan Hill, left, with Keeper of the Green winner Billy Griffith, James Wathen and Lon Chatfield.

Billy Griffith from Amelia National Golf and Country Club is the winner of the 2017 Keeper of the Green award from the North Florida GCSA. Griffith has worked in the North Florida region for 35 years with 22 of those at Amelia Island Plantation, where he learned from one of the best in the late Ron Hill, CGCS. After Amelia Island, he worked at Timuquana Golf and Country Club then the Golf Club at North Hampton before joining Amelia National.



Proud fathers of scholarship winners, Andy Maguire, Rip Phillips, Randall Jones and Steve LaFrance.

This award is given annually to a North Florida superintendent who has been active over the years in chapter affairs and shows the qualities of one who is worthy of recognition.

Congratulations also to Clayton Estes from San Jose Country Club on being named Superintendent of the Year by the North Florida PGA Section and by the section's Northern Chapter. The award recognizes the superintendent whose contributions to the facility show exceptional commitment of passion, time and resources to provide the best playing conditions and conservation practices.

Thanks to Al Clements, his assistant superintendent Joey Flinchbaugh and all the staff for hosting our annual research tournament at Pablo Creek Golf Club. It was a little cool and at times a little rainy but everyone enjoyed themselves. All proceeds will go to the Florida GCSA turfgrass research fund.

We awarded four memorial scholarships for 2017 each worth \$1,500. Recipients were Riley Jones, daughter of Randall Jones; Sierra Maguire, daughter of Andy Maguire; Hannah Phillips, daughter of Rip Phillips; and Marshall LaFrance, son of Steve LaFrance.

Our 25th annual Memorial Scholarship Golf Tournament was hosted by John Lammrsh at LPGA International and was once again a great success. Gross winners of the golf tournament were Bob Jones, Steve LaFrance, Mike Stevens and Clayton Estes. Wayne Senteno, Zack Hendrixson, Trevor Hughes and Kyle Crews won low net and donated their winnings back to the scholarship fund. Other winners on the day included John Love whose putting expertise won him a 55-inch television and Tim Allen who collected \$270 from the 50/50 drawing.

Remember our second annual inshore fishing tournament on June 17. Deadline for entries is June 2. Weigh-in the day is at Conch House in St. Augustine at 1.30pm.

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## PALM BEACH

The Palm Beach GCSA kicked off the year in great style at Breakers West thanks to host superintendent Mark Reid. We had over 50 Class A, B and C members turn out for nine holes of golf, social hour, then dinner and education. The program with emcee Seth Jones, editor-in-chief of Golfdom magazine, featured a wonderful slideshow presentation by John Zimmers. John gave a presentation with before and after pictures of the long-running renovation at Oakmont Country Club in preparation for last year's U.S. Open.

In February, we had over 50 attendees again for our assistant superintendent meeting that was open to all assistants from the Palm Beach, Treasure Coast, and South Florida chapters of the Florida GCSA. Nate Watkin and his staff did a wonderful job hosting this event, which was held at The Seagate Country Club. This free event included an excellent presentation by Jeff Plotz, director of agronomy at TPC Sawgrass, on renovations and preparations for The Players Championship. Jeff was previously at TPC Scottsdale and had a lot of great stories about the unique atmosphere at the Phoenix Open. Many thanks to Brian Bowles and ShowTurf for their sponsorship. We had outstanding vendor support for the event.

In March, we headed to Palm Beach Par 3,



George Farmer and Parker Ferren were among those who enjoyed a little sun, sand and surf with their golf at Palm Beach Par 3 in March.



Golfdom's Seth Jones, Robert Anderson, Brett Sanderson, Mark Reid, John Spiwak, speaker John Zimmers, Ryan Swilley, Deron Zendt, Steve Wright, CGCS and Parker Ferren.

hosted by superintendent, Tim Campbell. This is a wonderful facility where Tim does a fantastic job. This is one of our premier events of the year. There is nothing better than golf on the ocean!

In April, Jim Moore hosted us at Jupiter Country Club, where we enjoyed a great day of golf and a presentation by Mike Hamilton, of Turf Dietitian, who spoke about nutrients and their role in overall plant health.

The 37th annual Future of Golf Tournament will once again take place

at Eastpointe Country Club in Palm Beach Gardens on June 3. Several different entities will benefit from the funds raised from this event. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone there in a few weeks.

On June 17, the 16th annual

Palm Beach GCSA fishing tournament will take place at Blowing Rocks Marina. Please visit [www.floridagcsa.com](http://www.floridagcsa.com) for registration information regarding all these wonderful upcoming events.

Finally, please remember our scholarship award program which has a deadline for applications of July 1. This is a wonderful program to help the children and grandchildren of current Palm Beach GCSA members.

-John Spiwak, Eastpointe Country Club.

## CENTRAL FLORIDA

The Central Florida GCSA had 70 people take part in a golf and education event at Hawk's Landing Country Club in Orlando late April. Host superintendent Josh Kelley gave a talk on his new Diamond zoysiagrass greens.

Another recent event was at the Country Club of Orlando where host superintendent Josh Dunaway gave an extensive tour of the club's new maintenance facility. He also discussed the scope of a complete renovation this spring and summer with Forse Design and Landscapes Unlimited. We also had more than 80 people at an event at Interlachen Country Club in Winter Park. Thanks to

host superintendent Bryce Gibson and congratulations to golf winners Jayce Ramage and Steve Sorrell with a score of 68.

Congratulations also to Brandon Richey from Lake Nona Golf and Country Club on being selected to participate in the Syngenta Business Institute professional development program for golf course superintendents.

Look for more information soon on our annual meeting at Stonegate Golf Club on June 21.

-Lisa McDowell, Villas of Grand Cypress.

## SOUTH FLORIDA



Dr. Travis Shaddox, University of Florida chats with Doug Francis of Hector Turf, one of four presenting sponsors of the South Florida Turf Expo.



Mark Seigfried of SiteOne Landscape Supply which was a booth sponsor at the South Florida Turf Expo.

The South Florida GCSA Turf Expo was awesome; not to mention the food from Mission BBQ which was also amazing. I

would like to send a special thank you to all of our vendors, volunteers, attendees and the University of Florida/IFAS team who contributed to the success of this event. All funds raised during the Expo support research programs being conducted at the University of Florida's Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center.

-Billy Entwistle, Jr. Flamingo Lakes Golf and Country Club.

## WEST COAST

The Florida West Coast GCSA is heading in the right direction again thanks to the efforts of a lot of people over the past few years. All of those efforts have aimed to enhance the chapter experience for superintendents in the Tampa Bay area. We now have a tentative annual schedule of six to eight events with a good mixture of golf, education and networking. Most

importantly we have an awesome group of volunteers eager to serve the chapter's success.

One of those meetings was at Palma Ceia Golf and Country Club in March. The theme of the meeting was around water quality. With the organizational help of Mark Langner of Aqua-Aid we were able to put on a great program. We had nearly 40 people attend to learn about everything from interpreting water quality reports to water treatment. Attendees received four CEUs as well as GCSAA education points. Thanks to Carson Kamps for hosting the event and to the staff at Palma Ceia for an excellent lunch.

At press time we were looking forward to our hickory golf outing at historic Clearwater Country Club. This event was also to include an industry roundtable. We also were looking forward to hosting a BMP certification class at Hunter's Green Country Club on May 10. ■

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# Superintendents Tout GAME IN TALLAHASSEE

Golf course superintendents remain at the forefront of government outreach efforts after another successful visit to Tallahassee in April. A strong Florida GCSA contingent joined with representatives of a host of allied golf organizations that make up the Golf Florida Alliance for the annual Florida Golf Day activities. A highlight of the day was a golf and government roundtable where golf leaders interacted directly with a host of key department heads, staff directors and elected officials including Secretary of State Ken Detzner.

“Golf remains a positive citizen in the eyes of everybody we met with,” says Florida GCSA executive director Jennifer Bryan. “We weren’t making any asks. We were there to provide information and build relationships. That goes a long way with these folks I think because it means they are better equipped to make informed decisions when the time comes.”

A busy schedule set down for the day was soon being reshuffled because of overnight drama involving Senator Frank Artiles, R-

Miami, which eventually resulted in his resignation. Artiles later apologized for a verbal attack on supporters of Senate President Joe Negron which included racial slurs.

For his part, Negron was in good spirits when he was finally able to meet with the golf delegation and the Florida GCSA’s Greg Pheneger, CGCS from Johns Island Club. Earlier the entire delegation met with Negron’s chief of staff Cheri Vancura. Later, Negron even took time to try his hand with a putter at a mini-teaching center set up for visitors to a display set up by the golf industry at the Capitol Building.

The delegation also met with Department of Agriculture legislative director Grace Lovett and Pheneger represented superintendents in a smaller meeting with Governor Rick Scott’s chief of staff Kim McDougal. Meetings centered on the industry’s economic impact, growth of youth development programs and enhanced focus on environmental sustainability.

Latest figures measure the game’s direct economic impact in

Florida at \$8.2 billion, supporting more than 132,000 jobs and \$3.6 billion in wage income. Florida is home to more than 1,000 golf courses, the most of any U.S. state.

“We were thrilled to share golf’s key findings with state legislators, further promoting the game’s many benefits,” says Steve Mona, chief executive officer of the World Golf Foundation and administrator of GOLF 20/20. “Home to more than 1,000 courses, more than any U.S. state, the game contributes to local communities in Florida by creating jobs, driving tax revenue and increasing tourism value.”

Along with the Florida GCSA, Florida Golf Day attendees included the Florida Chapter of the Club Managers Association of America, Florida Department of State – Division of Historical Resources, Florida State University Global Club Management Program, Florida State Golf Association, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, Harrell’s, North and South Florida Sections of the PGA of America, PGA of America, PGA TOUR, WGF and World Golf Hall of Fame.

“The annual celebration of Florida Golf Day serves as a friendly reminder and testament to the economic, environmental and fitness benefits the game provides to our home state,” says Representative Jim Boyd, Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee. “Golf plays an integral role in driving and stimulating the economy with contributions that will positively affect generations to come.” ■



Governor Rick Scott’s chief of staff Kim McDougal, World Golf Foundation’s Steve Mona and Greg Pheneger, CGCS from Johns Island Club in the Governor’s office.

Florida GCSA delegation members GCSAA field staffer Ralph Dain, CGCS, Florida GCSA vice-president John Curran, president Ricky Reeves, executive director Jennifer Bryan, Jason Frank and Will Harrell of Harrell’s, and Florida GCSA government affairs lead Greg Pheneger, CGCS with The Players Championship trophy at Florida Golf Day.



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# Florida Gains Traction AT NATIONAL GOLF DAY



**E**rin Stevens, CGCS, MG feels like he's on home ground when he visits the nation's nerve center. He grew up in Maryland, attended the University of Maryland and worked at Congressional Country Club just over a dozen miles from The White House. But he admits he was "blown away" by the chance to walk the halls of the Senate and Congress during National Golf Day in Washington, D.C. in April.

For Stevens, who is director of golf course maintenance at Emerald Dunes Club in West Palm Beach, it was his first trip as part of the Golf Day delegation. "It really was an eye-opener to see how far the golf industry has come with government advocacy," he says. "I felt the people we met with were very receptive. They genuinely listened and took notes. To get the chance to walk around inside those halls was something most people never get the chance to do."

Stevens' summation aligns with that of Kevin Sunderman, a third year veteran of Golf Day. Sunderman from Isla Del Sol Yacht and Country Club in St. Petersburg is a Florida GCSA past-president and was recently appointed to the GCSAA board of directors. He felt ears were little more open than in previous years.

"My first couple of years it felt like we were going through the motions," he says. "Those who were with us were with us and our opponents weren't changing their minds. This year there was some traction. Some of the staffers recognized us and that's a great thing."

*Golf delegation members on the steps of the Capitol.*

Sunderman was particularly encouraged by an interaction with a senior advisor to former Florida Governor and newly-elected Congressman Rep. Charlie Crist (D-13). The advisor, a former environmental lawyer, greeted the golf delegation with crossed arms and a belief that golf was a "polluter and water waster," Sunderman says. "After 15 minutes talking with him he really came around. When we told him about our (Florida GCSA) BMP program and that nearly 400 superintendents have taken a test they didn't have to take (the BMP certification exam) he was very impressed."

So much so, that as the meeting wrapped up, the advisor explained that Rep. Crist was establishing a small business advisory council. He suggested that Sunderman "or someone else in golf" would be a good fit to serve on the council.

For Stevens, the trip to D.C. enabled him to shake hands with Rep. Brian Mast (R-18) who he is assigned to build a relationship with as a member of GCSAA's Grassroots Ambassadors program. Stevens signed on two years ago but subsequently lost his wife to cancer and the election campaign left candidates little time for anything else.

"I'd reached out a few times but everyone's attention was elsewhere. It was good to get to meet him," he says. "What a great guy. Rep. Mast was really welcoming. He says he plays golf and takes his son golfing." That fact is all the more notable since Mast lost both legs serving in the U.S. Army. Stevens himself served in the U.S. Navy before becoming a golf course superintendent.

"It was amazing to me how many people we spoke with who either played golf or who have family members who play golf," says Stevens, who also recently joined GCSAA's government affairs



*Ryan Swilley, Rafael Barajas, CGCS, Rep. Brian Mast, Darren Davis, CGCS, Parker Ferren, golf author Elisa Gaudet and Erin Stevens.*

committee. "So when we stressed the message about golf's importance as an industry that provides economic benefit and jobs it was definitely being heard. But it was also important to tell the story of golf providing green space and of how superintendents are environmental stewards because I don't think that knowledge and perception is as widespread as it needs to be."

National Golf Day 2017 was the 10th anniversary of the event. A record 175 Congressional meetings were scheduled and nearly 200 attendees from 35 U.S. states participated. Other members of the delegation from the Florida GCSA were:

- Rafael Barajas, CGCS Boca Grove Plantation
- Darren Davis, CGCS Olde Florida Golf Club
- Eric Dixon, Chi Chi Rodriguez Golf Club
- Parker Ferren, Boca Woods Country Club
- Sean O'Brien, CGCS Ritz-Carlton Members Club
- Gregory Pheneger, CGCS Johns Island Club
- David Robinson, CGCS Marriott Golf
- Ryan Swilley, Gulfstream Golf Club. ■



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# Golf Championships SET FOR STREAMSONG

Florida GCSA members will head to Streamsong Resort, above, near Bowling Green for this year's annual meeting and individual and team golf championships on August 3 and 4. Rusty Mercer is director of agronomy at the facility that will open its third course this fall. "We're excited to be able to give our members this wonderful opportunity," says Florida GCSA president Ricky Reeves. "Streamsong is an exceptional facility that is certain to generate a strong turnout."

Streamsong recently featured in a report in USA Today's Green Living magazine that touted the golf industry's continued efforts towards environmental sustainability. The report on April 8 was headlined: "Five courses that put the green back in golf - The game is more sustainable than it's ever been."

The following is excerpted from that report to help give Florida GCSA members a taste of what to expect in August -

The major trend in golf courses these days is a more natural experience. Sure, golfers and course superintendents still want emerald fairways and obsessively tended putting greens. But the more natural the course, the closer the experience is to nature and the more satisfying.

Hundreds of golf facilities across the U.S. are designated as sanctuaries. They limit pesticides, enhance habitats and institute green initiatives such as solar-powered carts and geothermal clubhouses. Many reclaim water, use the natural environment and promote eco-friendly practices to players. That's a seismic change from the designs and constructions of the post-World War II building boom.

### Streamsong Resort, Florida

When Mosaic, the world's largest phosphate and potash mining

company and the seventh largest landholder in Florida, stopped mining phosphate on a 16,000-acre plot, its developers created three golf courses with a minimalist touch — and they couldn't have planned better. "This tract was an active mine for 100 years," says Tom Sunnarborg, vice-president of land development and management. The mining process separated the clay and sand from the phosphate; the clay was returned to the shallow pits first, allowing it to harden. Then sand was pumped on top, allowing nature to reshape it with wind and water into naturalized dunes, now fuzzy with indigenous vegetation.

"This allowed a unique water recycling system," Sunnarborg says. "Irrigation and rainwater hits our courses, (percolates) through the sand, hits the clay and travels back to our irrigation lakes and is recycled." The sand dunes may not be natural, but they are stunning, some almost 100 feet tall. "The architects did not move them," he says. "Those dunes are the stars of our show."

A minimalist philosophy permeates the entire resort. "We challenge conventional thinking of resort and golf development," Sunnarborg says. "We emphasize walking. We don't have rough. The fairways end in natural areas. We don't irrigate outside areas of play, other than a tiny bit around the clubhouse. We don't plant flowers. We don't use street lights. We don't have a fountain at our entrance. Our entrance isn't even lit. We don't do anything that's not necessary. No houses or condos. The clubhouse is intentionally underneath the vista of the dunes. It's a beautiful building, but it is secondary to the land form."

Other courses cited on the list of five were Los Robles Greens Golf Course, Thousand Oaks, CA; The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs, CO; Chambers Bay; Tacoma, WA; and Mossy Oak Golf Club; West Point, MS. ■

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# College Aims to Provide GATEWAY FOR ASSISTANTS



Florida Gateway College's new horticulture program coordinator John Petersen.

Joseph Petersen, the new coordinator of Florida Gateway College's horticulture program in Lake City, is calling on golf course superintendents to help themselves and their industry by encouraging talented people towards the program. Superintendents across the country, and particularly in Florida are currently struggling to fill assistant superintendent positions. Petersen believes the college's online certificate serves as an ideal next step for promising crew members or part-time employees getting ready to graduate high school.

"There are a lot of talented people out there who are in jobs and who are learning how to do things," he says. "We want to teach them why, teach them the science behind what they're doing. That will put them in a much stronger position to contend for promotion to assistant superintendent roles. We want superintendents and anyone in golf to know what we offer and hope they will pass that message on."

Florida Gateway offers a six-course horticulture certificate entirely online. The certificate provides a basic background in plant science and horticulture. Beginning in the fall, the college will expand the program adding a four-course advanced certificate to include Integrated Pest Management 1 and 2, materials calculation or project estimating and advanced turfgrass science.

The horticulture program at Florida Gateway is supported by a seven-person advisory board that includes a trio with golf course

maintenance expertise. They include David Robinson, CGCS from Marriott Golf, Anthony Baur from St. Johns Golf Club and Kevin Downing, CGCS from Three Putt Services.

Downing, a Florida GCSA past-president and himself a graduate from what was formerly known as Lake City Community College, says superintendents are having a difficult time finding suitable candidates to fill first and second assistant positions. "I looked on one website the other day and counted 51 openings for assistants and about 10 of them were in Florida," Downing says. "Superintendents just can't find anyone to fill their needs. It's dire. Here is a program that can help build a better employee. But it's going to take people being made aware of the opportunity."

Beyond improved job prospects, potential students also have the chance to secure scholarship support for their studies. "Because of the long-standing generosity of the golf industry and people in the business, we are able to offer an extensive scholarship program," Petersen says. "Based on performance, a student can get up to 100 percent of their tuition (\$3,400 in-state and \$6,800 out-of-state) reimbursed. We want to do all we can to make the program as affordable as possible."

The program offers two classes a semester over three semesters each year which means a student could comfortably complete the expanded 10-course program in about 18 months. The school has about 30 students enrolled for the spring and summer semesters. Petersen is optimistic that number could exceed 50 by the fall.

Petersen took over in December when John Piersol retired after a 43-year career as an educator. He brings 22 years of experience in horticulture working in nurseries, landscaping and greenhouses from California to Florida. He also owns a landscape design firm with clients across the country. "I love my plants, I know my plants," he says. Others on the programs advisory board are David Nowakowski of Harrell's Fertilizers, Dr. Stephanie Parker of Main-scape, Drew Futch of Hardeman Landscape Nursery and Randall Hand of Sun State Landscape Management.

Downing notes that Florida Gateway will soon rejoin competitive golf ranks after a 39-year absence. The school recently appointed John Reger as coach. Reger was formerly head golf coach at Hillsborough Community College in Tampa.

"I think being back in competitive golf will help generate more interest in the horticulture certificate," says Downing, who played on the golf team in 1974 and '75. "Anything that gets golf more in the forefront at the school will be good for the golf industry. The college president Dr. Lawrence Barrett is a supporter of golf and there is a lot of excitement about what is ahead."

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## Association Considers Reel Deal FOR TURF EQUIPMENT MANAGERS

By Nick Kearns

Golf course superintendents know and appreciate the value of a good assistant superintendent. But neither of us can produce the results we are capable of without fully functioning equipment. That is why superintendents and assistants place so much emphasis on a key third player in the team – the turf equipment manager.

Despite how critical they are to the overall performance of the golf course maintenance staff and the condition of the golf course itself, equipment managers have, historically, tended to operate in isolation. That is, without the kind of networking and collaborative support and resources that an association like the Florida GCSA and our local chapters provide superintendents and assistants.

We think it might be time to change that situation. The Florida GCSA is investigating a new equipment manager membership classification, along the lines that GCSAA introduced in 2015. We are talking about it at a board level and with the leaders of the local chapters.

The goal would be to create avenues for equipment managers to establish and enhance their networks, access more education and strengthen their working relationships with superintendents. That latter point is a big one.

Anything we can do to really establish a cohesive team at the facility is a worthwhile cause. It is one thing to have a good equipment manager who has all the mechanical and technical expertise but there has to be a good relationship, good communication, to get the most out of those attributes. Not being able to get on the same page can have seriously negative consequences.

Of course there really is nothing stopping superintendents bringing equipment managers along to meetings right now. While the subject of the education might be agronomic, chances are there would be something in there of value to their work. And merely being in the company of superintendents who may be more accustomed to networking would help them hone their own networking skills.

But we think there is merit in creating tailor made opportunities for equipment managers to get involved, to get to know one another better, and for their superintendents to help broker that process. Just as it could make sense for equipment managers to broaden their agronomic knowledge, so could it help superintendents to go to an equipment managers meeting

and learn the specifics of setting up reels and mowers.

This is not a revenue raising effort by any stretch of the imagination. In fact there is talk, at least in the first year or two, of offering membership for free or perhaps a nominal fee, just enough to cover administrative costs. We think the benefits of bringing equipment managers into the fold, if you like, will serve everybody well. Even our vendor partners will be better served if they attend a meeting and the superintendent and equipment manager from a facility are both there. You could see some really meaningful conversations happening out of that.

I count myself among those superintendents fortunate enough to have not only a good equipment manager but also a good relationship with him. Jason Ziegler has been here at The Oaks Club for 11 years and he was instrumental in helping with my transition when I arrived four years ago. We get along great and I think we have a mutual trust so that we don't need to be in each other's ear all the time. But if something does come up, we're both very comfortable having the conversation to get it resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

This initiative is very much in its formative stages so we welcome any input you may have. ■

- Florida GCSA director Nick Kearns is golf course superintendent at the Oaks Club in Sarasota.



Equipment manager Jason Ziegler and superintendent Nick Kearns share a mutual trust that helps keep operations at The Oaks Club running smoothly.



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## Golf Course Maintenance Standards: A TOOL TOWARDS LONG-TERM SUCCESS

by Kyle Sweet, CGCS

*Standard: A level of quality or attainment; An idea or thing used as a measure, norm, or model in comparative evaluations.*

Golf course maintenance standards are something we have all heard of. They are surely not a new concept. If you have standards, terrific. If you think you don't, well, wait a minute, you already do. Of course you have standards.

The golf course superintendent profession is a very personal thing and we all do our jobs differently. So our standards may be a result of years of experience and know-how, or they may be influenced by your current owner, a general manager, green committee or even just years of working with golfers in your community who support your course and provide you with important feedback.

Regardless, if they are merely a concept and not written down and agreed upon by the people you are answerable to, then I believe that's a problem. At The Sanctuary our standards are reviewed for green committee approval each year. I can then count on those

green committee members to support what we are doing when a member might have a question or concern.

Having formal standards also helps you make meaningful decisions during the budget process. Honestly, how can you know what you need whether it's people or equipment if you don't know what your goal is for the golf course day to day?

Hopefully, with a just a little encouragement you can take what you already do - and in some ways how you do it - to establish a formal set of standards that can be of great help to you, your staff, your course maintenance operation and facility as a whole.

Where to start? Start with greens! We are all graded on our greens and in many cases - unfortunately - we are graded on green speed. Like it or not, that's where I start my standards document. The first page, the first line, reads.....

"Greens are to be smooth, firm and maintained at the following

*Standards can go well beyond the golf course. Many clubhouses have high profile, high maintenance landscapes that could benefit from agreed upon maintenance standards.*



speeds. November - April green speeds must measure 10.5-11.5ft. May - October green speeds must measure 8.5 - 9.5ft. In extreme conditions, green speeds may be slower but will require notification to the green committee and communication to the membership."

By some measures those are slow speeds but for our place, with undulating greens, seashore paspalum and a very seasonal equity membership, those speeds work for us. Take the same sentence and fill in your own information and you've created a green speed standard. In your heart do you agree with it? Can you sustain it? Are you willing to go to bat for it? Will you jump up and holler to defend it? Seriously, ask all those questions and if the answer is "yes" then put it in black and white and make it so.

There can be all types of input regarding a decision such as a green speed standard and getting agreement is critical. Everyone is going to have a different path to the goal. Once the standard for green speed is set then you can base your management of the greens on that standard. As I indicated earlier, budgeting will become less guesswork and using the standard as a tool to dictate your management regime will just happen.

Standards are about much more than greens, of course. So I'd like to expand on a few areas that are generally hot button items for us grass guys.

### Golf Course Service Standards

"No. 14: Hole-in-white painting will be done for member-guest, invitationals and The Masters Par 3 event. Daily hole-in-white painting is an unnecessary use of resources."

This is a standard that I have a passion for, but like I said we all do this job differently and I know a majority of superintendents now paint the hole. So when we have our invitationals events we go ahead and paint so our membership has a different, supposedly improved presentation and guests feel more comfortable with what may be an everyday standard at their club. What's great is that my members ask why we don't do it all the time and I explain that the labor and product cost is something I would rather put to use in a way that makes the course better, not lipstick where it shouldn't be.



*From tree trimming to turf maintenance, golf maintenance standards can be created and benefit the entire maintenance operation.*



*Varying mowing directions, adjusting mowing patterns and changing mowing heights of fairways can all be written into maintenance standards.*

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Ultimately, you're working to provide golfer satisfaction and well planned standards can allow you to properly manage the course and meet expectations of your golfers.

#### Pesticide /Fertilizer Applications Standards

"No. 5: Liquid chemical and fertilizer applications will be accomplished on greens with the use of a walking boom sprayer (Spray Hawk, Spray Bug). No heavy equipment will be used on greens for these applications."

Trust me, if I didn't truly believe in this standard, which I have stressed to my general manager and members, there have been plenty of times that I would have, for time and trouble's sake, just taken the spray rig over the green. But at heights below .125 of an inch can we really afford to have tire tracking on greens? Is this an irrational standard? It's not for us and not because we have more money than someone else. It's more about quality and presentation.

#### Safety /Legal /Environmental Standards

Yes, there are such things! If you want to push yourself to get Audubon certified, BMP certified, have your staff get their pesticide license or run a water quality testing program, make it a standard.

"No. 4: Golf course superintendent, assistant superintendent and IPM manager must hold current Best Management Practices certification from the Florida GCSA."

"No. 6: The Sanctuary Golf Club will maintain certification as a certified Audubon cooperative sanctuary golf course."

"No. 17: The green and grounds department will annually update the hurricane action plan prior to June 1 each year."

Ok, I think you get the picture. These operational items may be specific to our operation but as I said earlier, the standards dictate the management and help ensure that all the key players are on the same page. Written standards that go beyond a rough idea in your head will take care of a lot of second-guessing from others. With clear expectations for you and your department, your course maintenance can become more efficient and effective.

I encourage you to work with your staff and your club management to create golf course management standards. They can be a valuable tool and a great help to you and your club's long term success. For a complete copy of our standards here at The Sanctuary Golf Club, please email me your request at ksweet@sanctuarygc.net. I'll be glad to say hello and send them your way! ■

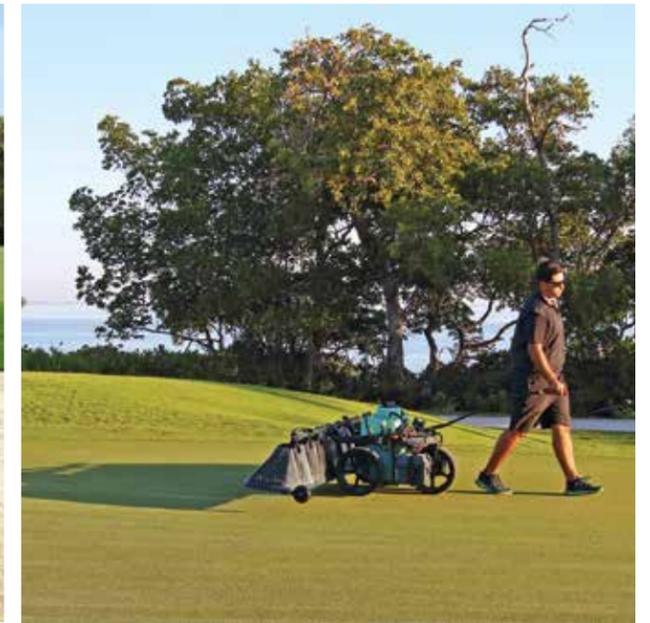
*-Kyle Sweet is certified golf course superintendent at The Sanctuary Golf Club in Sanibel.*



Standards for golf maintenance can help alleviate unnecessary requests such as Hole-in-white painting on a daily basis, which is a waste of time and resources.



Standards in bunker maintenance will greatly vary from course to course. These high maintenance hazards are always a topic of discussion from your golfers. Clear standards can help.



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## Sunshine State Provides WARM WELCOME FOR GIS

Florida GCSA past-president David Dore-Smith welcomes attendees to the 2017 Golf Industry Show in Orlando backed by president Ricky Reeves, vice-president John Curran and executive director Jennifer Bryan.

The Florida GCSA helped set the tone for a fun and successful Golf Industry Show that attracted about 13,000 attendees in Orlando in February. On the back of an introduction from president Ricky Reeves from Miami Beach Golf Club, the association had a large crowd laughing and clapping with a brief video presentation at the welcome reception. With vice-president John Curran from Johns Island Club, past-president David Dore-Smith, CGCS from Copperleaf Golf Club and executive director Jennifer Bryan on stage as well, it was a strong showing from the host state.

Dore-Smith then stepped forward to personalize the welcome. He highlighted the fact that golf in Florida generates an economic impact of more than \$8 billion and supports more than 130,000 jobs. He underlined how Florida superintendents, as individual award winners and as an association, have helped lead the way on environmental performance. He also paid tribute to Florida's record of administrative leadership citing GCSAA past-presidents Bob Randquist, CGCS and Gary Grigg.

He closed with well wishes to three other Florida GCSA members who were up for election at GCSAA's annual meeting later in the week. Those wishes found the mark. Darren Davis from Olde Florida Golf Club was elected vice-president, Rafael Barajas, CGCS from Boca Grove Plantation was elected secretary-treasurer and Kevin Sunderman from Isla Del Sol Yacht and Country Club



was appointed to a one-year term by the board of directors.

"For Florida to have three people on the national board of directors is a good thing for superintendents and for the golf industry in our state," Reeves says. "But more importantly for all superintendents in GCSAA and for the industry across the country, it's a great thing to have three men of their caliber in office, regardless of where they are from. We congratulate each of them and are grateful for their service."

Florida was also prominent later in the opening night program when Shannon Easter from Broken Sound Golf Club received the major prize in the 2016 Environmental Leaders in Golf Awards, presented annually by GCSAA and Golf Digest in partnership with Syngenta and Rain Bird's Golf Division. Easter and Broken Sound won in the overall and national private categories.

Easter joined a growing list of ELGA winners from Florida that, as Dore-Smith mentioned in his speech, includes "people like Tim Hiers, Matt Taylor, Darren Davis and Josh Kelley." That list now

also includes Sean O'Brien, CGCS from The Ritz-Carlton Member's Golf Club who was a chapter winner from the Sun Coast GCSA.

It was a big week for O'Brien who was also celebrated for attaining his certification last year. He and Bryce Koch, CGCS from Cypress Lake Country Club were among 20 newly certified superintendents who were recognized at a luncheon during GIS week.

Other notable moments for Florida GCSA members included the presentation of TurfNet's Superintendent of the Year award to Dick Gray from PGA Golf Club (see story page 36). Ron Trebilcock from Hibiscus Golf Club went home with a brand-new Harley Davidson motorcycle after winning a drawing by the Golf Course Builders Association of America (see story page 34) and Brad Caporini from Old Corkscrew Golf Club attended GIS as Melrose Leadership Academy a grant recipient.

Still nowhere was the sense of celebration greater than at B.B. King's Blues Club mid-week. About 850 members and friends of the Florida GCSA partied with live music and more. "It was a great night to be a member of the Florida GCSA," says executive director Jennifer Bryan. "To see so many people having so much fun together speaks to the bonds created by the superintendent profession and this association."

Bryan says so much of the success of the event was thanks to the continued loyalty and support of sponsors and industry partners. "We are extremely grateful for the relationships we have with so many good people and good companies," she says. "They are truly vested in the success of the industry and the superintendent profession." Bryan also thanked Lisa McDowell, administrative assistant from the Villas at Grand Cypress, who helped check-in the crowd at the door.

Among those that McDowell helped greet was Keith Einwag from Laurel Oak Country Club who was the winner of a stand-up paddle board raffled at the Florida GCSA reception. Samantha Kriesch from the Calusa GCSA won the 50/50.

Earlier in the week, Seth Strickland from Miami Shores Country Club made a strong run at his fourth GCSAA golf championship. A winner in 2005, '08 and '09, Strickland led after a two-under par 70 in the opening round. He recorded five birdies in his second round but they were interspersed with some



GCSAA president Peter Grass, CGCS, Jeff Cox of Syngenta, with Environmental Leader in Golf Award winner Shannon Easter from Broken Sound Golf Club and Carolyn Maloney of Rain Bird and GCSAA chief executive officer Rhett Evans.

speed bumps including two triple-bogeys, two double-bogeys and three bogeys. In the end, his second round 80 left him in a tie for third place three shots behind winner Mike Stieler from Spring Creek Golf and Country Club in California.

Strickland was also a member of the Florida No. 2 team that finished third in the chapter team championship. He was joined by Stuart Bothe from Vanderbilt Country Club; Steven Bernard from Adios Golf Club, Jim Torba from Pelican Preserve Golf Club and Declan Freswick from Gleneagles Country Club. ■

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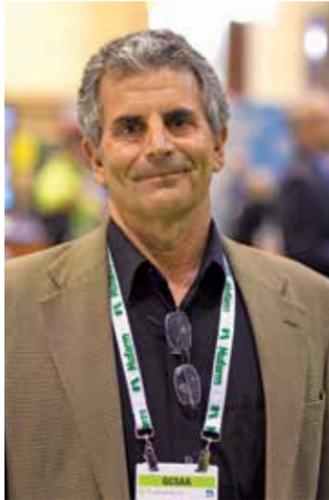
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Tony Disano, CGCS Lake Jovita Golf and Country Club.



Anthony "Scott" Willis, Done Right Irrigation; Bo Estey, Jr. CGCS Quail Valley Golf Club; and Deron Zendt, Banyan Golf Club.



Nate Maurer, Jacksonville Golf and Country Club.



George Cook, Southern Ag. and Bayer; Addison Barden, USGA; and Todd Lowe, USGA Green Section.



John Curran, Greg Pheneger, CGCS and Barry Balavender, all from John's Island Club.



Mark Thomas, Kelly Greens Golf and Country Club; and Bill Nye, Redox Turf.



Butch Soto, Landscapes Unlimited; Mark Reid, The Breakers; and Eric Snell, The Breakers Ocean Club.



Keith Einweg from Laurel Oak Country Club won the stand-up paddle board.



Dr. Gerald Henry, University of Georgia; Dr. Jason Kruse, University of Florida; and Billy Browning, King Ranch.



Samantha Kriesch of the Calusa GCSA won the 50/50 raffle.



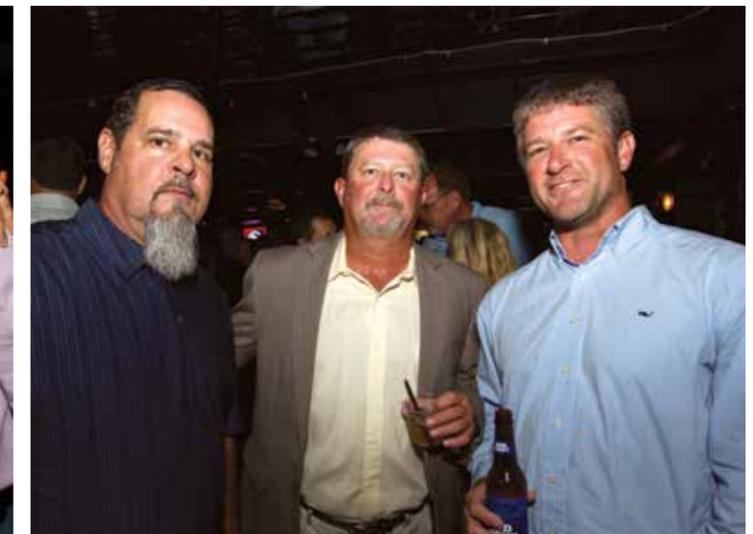
Blair Kirby, The Club at Admirals Cove; Cody Boutte, Loblolly Golf Club; and Chris Miller, ProPlus.



Jim Colo, Naples National; and Carlyn and Alan Brown, Timuquana Country Club.



Nick Sabatino, Hole-in-the-Wall Golf Club; Juan Gutierrez, Ocean Reef Club; Oscar Tenorio, Trigon.



Mike Rowe, Golf Ventures; Bo Irby, Spruce Creek Country Club; and Jeff Pilcher, Trigon Turf.



# Luck of the Draw Makes TREBILCOCK AN EASY RIDER

For years, Rob Trebilcock, golf course superintendent at Hibiscus Golf Club in Naples, owned a moped. Now he owns a Harley. It's a bit of a step up and one Trebilcock had pretty much ruled out after a cousin suffered terrible injuries sustained and eventually died after a motorcycle accident.

But that was a long time ago and before Trebilcock dropped a card with his name on it in a barrel at the Golf Course Builders Association of America booth at the Golf Industry Show. He dreamed about winning but didn't really think he would.

But then he did win – a 2017 Harley-Davidson Heritage Softail Classic with a sticker price of \$17,900. Now 40 and past his “younger, sillier days” Trebilcock decided to keep the machine. He got his motorcycle endorsement through Harley-Davidson and has gently run up 600 miles on his new machine.

“I'd like to think I'm old enough to make some wiser decisions these days,” he laughs. “I thought about selling it at first and that's still an option. But I wanted to give it a whirl, so I could say I owned a Harley at one time in my life.”

Trebilcock has been superintendent at Hibiscus for eight years. He graduated from Michigan State and at one point interned at the Cincinnati Reds baseball field. He wasn't planning on a career in golf but then his mother asked him to house- and dog-sit for a friend who was going on a cruise. The friend's house happened to be in Florida, inside The Strand in Naples.

“I was going to take a little time off after graduating so I came down and I liked the area,” Trebilcock says. “I saw how many golf courses there were.” And next thing he was working on the crew at Valencia Golf and Country Club for \$10 an hour. Over time he worked his way up to the assistant superintendent role.

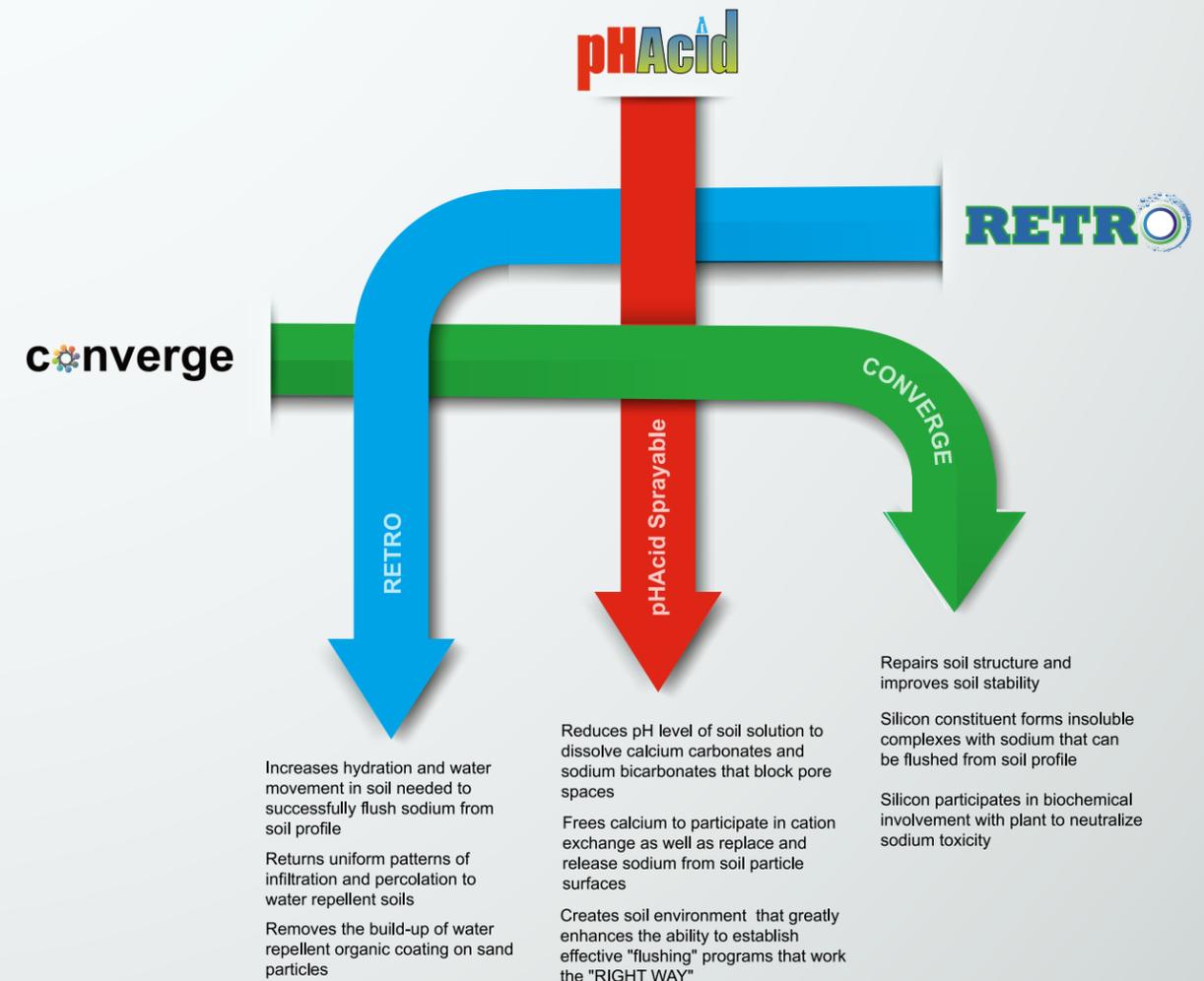
Cruising down Tamiami Trail astride the latest, greatest Harley-Davidson is a long way from those \$10-an-hour days. Trebilcock admits it feels pretty good. About the only thing uncomfortable in the hip pocket area is a dent from the 28 percent gift tax he had to pay. That aside, everything else about his vivid black ride is golden. ■

Triumphant Rob Trebilcock astride his new Harley-Davidson outside Hibiscus Golf Club.



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# Greenkeeping Legend Makes AWARD A CLEAR-CUT GRAY AREA

Story and Photos by Jason Bruno

**D**ick Gray is a turf lifer, a greenkeeper of the highest order. At 73 years young, Gray has tended to some of the finest parcels of American golf landscape for 50 years.

Gray's beginnings were in the field with legendary course designer Pete Dye at Crooked Stick in Carmel, IN and The Golf Club in New Albany, OH. After settling in South Florida, Gray was project manager during the design and grow-in phase at Loblolly Pines in Hobe Sound. The Sullivan family, impressed by his work kept him on as superintendent of the P.B Dye design.

The Florida Club in Stuart is the one and only layout Gray counts as his own course design. He also served at Jupiter Hills Club in Tequesta, which was ranked among Golf Digest's "America's 100 Greatest Courses in the United States" while he was there. He also spent time at Sailfish Point Golf Club in Stuart

Now, Gray is at PGA Village. With the help of his staff of 77, Gray tends to the four championship courses designed by Dye and Tom and Jim Fazio. In addition to those 72 holes and a six-hole short course, Gray and staff also maintain the 35 acre PGA Learning Center. In late January, TurfNet named Dick Gray the 2016 Superintendent of the Year.

Recently we sat down with the "keeper of the sod" for a brief Q & A at the PGA of America's flagship property for lunch at the Taplow Pub. Just 10 yards from our booth, a certain shiny gold trinket of note was on display. . .

JB: You were named TurfNet Magazine Superintendent of the Year for 2016, your thoughts?

DG: There are two thousand guys and women who could have won that award. I know that for a fact, because that many of us do the same thing at the same intensity for all the same reasons. I was lucky enough to have somebody who could write something (PGA Village marketing specialist Adriana Vizcaya) and tell the story. I've never had a sidekick like Adriana. There's a lot of guys out there who do everything I do and better, but don't have anybody to write the story. I feel very fortunate and humbled, but I had a lot of help.

JB: You're not a big fan of the title "superintendent." Why?

DG: There are a lot of superintendents. You've have the police superintendent, school superintendent, the building superintendent, but there's only one superintendent that does any green keeping, and that better be your core strength. If you look at this thing as a big umbrella that has ribs, and every one of these ribs adds strength to the umbrella. You have a rib of leadership, agronomy, communication and so whatever these strengths are that people



Dick Gray and the Ryder Cup trophy.

have, that's all part of this umbrella. Not every umbrella is the same size. If you're not a good greenkeeper you're going to be mediocre. What makes it click is the greenkeeper, so when somebody asks, that's just what I say - I'm a greenkeeper.

JB: You're 73, where are you finding the energy to take on all of these renovation projects (the Ryder Course renovation begins late spring)?

DG: I don't see it as an energy stealer. It's something that I like to do, with people that I like to do it with. I get go to the golf course every morning, so I don't see it as work. As far as being 73, physically I was always a late bloomer. Back when I was 25, Pete Dye told me to go to Columbus to look at The Golf Club that he re-did in Albany. Chuck Compton was the super and Mr. Jones (Fred Jones) was the owner. The last thing Pete told me was "I think you better start shaving." I take after my mother's side, Norwegian. I look like my maternal grandpa, handsomely bald (laughing). On the flipside of that, I do the same wrestling workout that I've done since I was 50-40-30 years old. We have a gym over at the house. I just keep doing what I always have. I don't do it as well, and I don't do it as much but I don't physically or mentally feel like I'm 73.

JB: What are the biggest challenges for you and your staff here at PGA?

DG: Really it's time. My job is to polish the apples, and in a sense to sell the apples. If I don't have time to polish the apples, I can't

sell them. We're getting better because we have 7.30am tee times now instead of 7.03am. We don't have time to get the table set and get the meal prepared before we get this onslaught of people. Hopefully they appreciate the conditions we give them even though they're not always ideal because we're always running from play. We have a mission statement - "tournament ready every day." Our mantra is that "There isn't going to be anybody better than us." We have to be better than the competition. From a pride standpoint, and the (PGA Golf Club) logo we need to be as good as we can possibly be. That's a little frustrating because we'll probably never quite get there. We're always fighting time to get as much done as we can, as effectively and economically and still exceed expectations.

JB: What kind of influence has Pete Dye had on you and your career, not only from a greenkeeping standpoint, but also your renovation work?

DG: He has been a driving influence for me. When you go back over your career there have been those people in your life that have made a difference. I liken it to a pinball. They put your ball in motion and the lights light up. At some point in time that ball starts to run out of places to go and that flipper restarts it back up again - Pete was one of those main flippers for me. He was the one who really got the ball rolling. When I first met him, after two hours together, I thought "I really like this guy" and I was young. He was very self-deprecating. He stayed right there on the ground with you, he walked around, he never talked down to you, just straight out. He made me feel like I was important, he took me un-

der his wing. Pete is a superintendent's architect, he really is. Some guys will say "Look what he designed, you can't maintain it." Well, it's your job to figure out how to do it.

Then years later I got hooked up with his son P.B at Loblolly. Mr. Sullivan (founder of Loblolly Pines in Hobe Sound who recently passed away), Pete (and Alice) Dye were the people that have had the greatest influence on me. You learn to see what they see, and you learn to look for what they look for. Those people had the greatest impact, and I could never repay them. I wrote them both similar letters explaining that.

JB: The partnership here with general manager Jimmy Terry is paying huge results. You guys have really turned this place around, your thoughts?

DG: It has been really good. He has taught me so much. I learned how to delegate, which I was never very good at.

JB: Have you've passed on the influence that Pete Dye and John Sullivan had on you.

DG: I think as you go further along, you realize you don't have to be afraid of your job anymore. You can forget "you" and start teaching and coaching. My feeling is that I may not out-think our competitors, but I'm going to out-coach them. The word used to be "manage" and the phrase was "you have to manage your people." Well, you manage finances, you coach people. To get them to do it the way that you want them to do it is coaching. It's teaching with emotion, that's what it is. ■

The bunker complex on the par five seventh hole at the Dye course at PGA Golf Club speaks to the level of detail and attention that are hallmarks of Gray's reputation.





Just some members of the Aussie influx: Matthew Tacilauskas, Brook Maxwell, Mark Reid, David Dore-Smith, Stuart Bothe and Blair Kirby.

# THESE BLOKES COME FROM A LAND DOWNUNDER

By Trent Bouts

It was back in the late '90s that a flight from Sydney, Australia to San Francisco, California was filled with 12 young men looking to immerse themselves in turf maintenance through The Ohio State University's international intern program. "We didn't know each other when we first sat on the plane but by the end of the 14-hour flight we were best of mates," laughs one of them, a now older and considerably wiser David Dore-Smith.

For most in the group, it was their first venture overseas. Some would encounter differences that, coupled with the pull of home, were enough to send them back over the Pacific right on schedule once their internships were done. But for at least three on that flight, Dore-Smith, Brook Maxwell and Matthew Tacilauskas, the novelties of their new world coupled with vast opportunity enticed them to stick around.

Twenty years later, all three are still here, helping provide the kind of golf course conditioning that makes the game an \$8-billion boon to the Sunshine State each year. Dore-Smith is golf course superintendent at Copperleaf Golf Club in Bonita Springs and Maxwell is golf course superintendent at Pelican Marsh Golf Club less than half an hour south in Naples. Tacilauskas is about two and a half hours east at Palm Beach Country Club.

And they're not alone.

Thanks to that same long-running program at Ohio State, Florida

is home to a small but active community of ex-pat Aussies now numbering in double figures. "All of the guys agree – The Ohio State intern program is a wonderful and life-changing experience," Dore-Smith says. "We can't thank the superintendents enough who invested their time into developing the interns over the years and who continue to do so."

One of the pioneers of the Aussie influx, Mark Reid, was a 20-year-old kid who'd lived at home his entire life until he landed at Bear Lakes Country Club in West Palm Beach in the mid-'90s. He slept on the floor for the first few weeks of his internship but today is director of golf and grounds maintenance with 36 holes at The Breakers Palm Beach.

"When I set foot on that plane did I ever think I would be here, 11,000 miles away, all these years later?" Reid asks. "Absolutely not!" Yet "here" he undoubtedly is. With wife, Denise, and their three kids, Reid has put down personal roots as deep as the ones he gets paid to grow.

His success doesn't surprise Michael O'Keeffe, the genial, high-energy Irishman, who runs The Ohio State program and has done for decades. "They were quality kids," he says of the stream of young Aussie interns that have since settled in Florida. "We enjoyed having them here. They've not only gone on to good jobs,



Michael O'Keeffe



A younger Stuart Bothe, far right, and David Dore-Smith, third from right, with Greg Norman and crew members when *The Shark* visited Tiburon Golf Club.

**“They were quality kids. We enjoyed having them here. They’ve not only gone on to good jobs, they’re involved in their associations and giving back to the industry. They’re great ambassadors for their country.”**

**- Michael O’Keeffe**

they’re involved in their associations and giving back to the industry. They’re great ambassadors for their country.”

Reid himself is partly responsible for growing the number of “bokes” in Florida golf course maintenance, and elsewhere for that matter. For years at *The Breakers* and before that at *The Club* at Admirals Cove in Jupiter, he provided internships for young countrymen through The Ohio State program. His motives were simultaneously sound and selfish.

Reid appreciated the “work ethic that 99 percent of them had” and, knowing how much he’d benefited from The Ohio State program, he wanted to pay it forward. But just as much, he loved the breath of home all those kids brought with them. “They gave me something I was lacking, something I was missing,” he says. “It helped me stay in touch.”

There were interns from other countries too of course. “But I definitely had a strong preference for Aussies.” One of the “preferred” was Ashley Byham, now golf course superintendent at the Fazio II course at St. Andrews Country Club in Boca Raton.

The Reid and Byham families “lived across the street from each other” in Barooga, a town of about 1,200 people on the Murray River that separates New South Wales from Victoria. Byham’s father was the cook at the local golf course where Reid’s dad was superintendent. “I’ve known Ash since he was four or five,” Reid

says. So he didn’t hesitate when word came through that Byham was interested in interning in the U.S. through Ohio State.

“I love that kid. You’re never going to meet a harder working individual or anyone more passionate about what he does,” Reid says. Ultimately, Byham went to work for Reid full-time becoming his assistant at the Breakers West course. Luke Clay, assistant superintendent at *The Club* at Ibis in West Palm Beach and Blake Powers, assistant superintendent at Isleworth Country Club in Windermere, are other Aussie Reid interns who stuck around.

Another, Jimmy Trichter, is assistant golf course superintendent at *The Concession Golf Club* in Bradenton. While that puts him two hours away from the Naples enclave of Aussies, which also includes Stuart Bothe at Vanderbilt Country Club, and farther still from the group around Reid on the east coast, a quirk of geography means he gets to see a lot of the guys without having to leave town.

The Sarasota International Cricket Club is “right out the back door” from Concession and is a major draw for Aussies, particularly on major holidays such as Australia Day and Anzac Day, the nation’s equivalents to the Fourth of July and Veterans Day. Dore-Smith is among the regular visitors soaking up the mateship so integral to life back home.

As Trichter says, “I’m working too many hours to play cricket but I can go and have a beer. Also Aussie Rules footy is big in the area

and there’s a local rugby club. So everyone can get a fix of home pretty easily. I’m pretty lucky to have good mates to get together with and have a barbie and few beers.”

That’s a sentiment echoed by Reid on the other side of the state where he’s not only close to Byham and Tacilauskas but also Blair Kirby, who followed Reid’s footsteps to *The Club* at Admirals Cove, and is now director of golf course maintenance. “I’ve got my mates close by and I try to spend as much time with them as I can,” Reid says. “There’s a great nucleus of guys. We get together for a beer, a barbie, nine holes of golf, whatever. It helps me keep my accent!”

You’ll also find regular Aussie pairings at chapter and state association meetings. But that’s not to suggest they are insular by any means. As O’Keeffe says, they have a strong record of giving back. For example, Dore-Smith is past-president of the Florida GCSA, Bothe is current president of the Everglades GCSA and Reid serves on the board of *The First Tee* of the Palm Beaches.

Still, it’s a fact that they treasure access to some cultural familiarity. Reid says it was critical in getting him over the hump in those first few weeks all those years ago. He tells of finding himself seated on the plane out here next to a “big, burly Tasmanian.” He quickly discovered the Tasmanian, Steve Harris, was also headed to the States in The Ohio State intern program.

“I said ‘Where are you going’ and he said ‘Bear Lakes.’ I said ‘Bulldust.’ You can’t be. I’m going to Bear Lakes.” In no time Reid and Harris, now with a plum job back in Australia, were living with and leaning on each other as they negotiated the bumps and hiccups that come with life in a new country.

While Reid left Australia deliberately to “get out of the comfort zone and learn some life lessons” that didn’t make the process any less daunting, at least early on. “I’m so thankful they sent Steve along,” Reid says. “I was this Aussie kid who’d never been away from home and here I am in a new culture, new industry. Having him around those first few months while we were cutting our teeth and learning the ins and outs of the place was priceless.” Years later they would be best man at each other’s weddings.

O’Keeffe says creating bonds like those is a significant goal of the internship program. “That’s what we want,” he says. “There’s a purpose to our madness putting these guys together in close proximity as much as we can. That’s how they become friends, lifelong friends in some cases, but also so they build their networks that they can get help from when there’s an issue on their golf course.”

He laughs when he points out that Aussies traditionally don’t need a lot of encouragement when it comes to socializing. Dore-Smith recalls how he and a few others pitched in to buy Bothe a neon sign for his apartment when the two of them were working at Tiburon Golf Club, a Greg Norman designed course in Naples. Dore-Smith was the assistant and Bothe, the spray tech. The sign flashed “Club 206” such was the atmosphere at the apartment. “We had a lot of fun in those early days. We worked hard and played hard but never lost sight of why we were here and of our responsibilities,” Dore-Smith says.

Those memories and the ties he made during that period mean the world to Dore-Smith. “In the end that’s what makes the whole superintendent profession so great, the camaraderie,” he says. “It’s what the business is. And it’s what the associations at the state level and at the local chapter level are all about promoting.”

Like Reid, and in fact pretty much every one of his cohorts, Dore-Smith never dreamed he would be here permanently. “No, no, no,” he says. “My intention was to do my internship and come back and get a job in northern New South Wales or Queensland where it’s warmer.” But again like so many others, he was quickly enamored, not just with the immense opportunities here, but also the resources. “I’m still amazed by the tools we have here,” Reid says. “We’re 100 percent spoiled.”

The other thing most of them have in common of course was falling in love with an American woman, a byproduct of which is legal permanent residency. “Part of the paper work you have to sign when you do The Ohio State program effectively says that you won’t use the chance to get married and stay here,” Dore-Smith says. But bureaucracy is a meek weapon against matters of the heart.

As Reid says with a laugh: “I fell in love with my visa.”

# PROFILES

## Stuart Bothe



**Age:** 46  
**Family:** wife, Valerie; kids, Anthony, 11, and Nicholas, 8.  
**Facility:** Vanderbilt Country Club, Naples.  
**Title:** Golf course superintendent.  
**Years at current facility:** 13  
**Year finished internship:** 1999  
**Hometown in Australia:** Nhill, Victoria.  
**What do you miss most:** Meat pies, sausage rolls, Aussie Rules football and family.  
**Best thing about living in the U.S.:** Lifestyle.

## Ashley Byham



**Age:** 40  
**Family:** wife, Meredith; son Xavier, 5, and daughter, Harper, four months.  
**Facility:** St. Andrews Country Club, Boca Raton.  
**Title:** Golf course superintendent on the Fazio II course.  
**Years at current facility:** 6. I arrived in Florida in 2007 and was placed at Breakers West golf course as an intern for six months before accepting the assistant position at The Breakers Hotel Ocean Course. In 2010 I moved back to Breakers West as assistant. In 2011 I accepted the position as golf course superintendent on the Palmer course at St. Andrews Country Club. I moved over to the Olde course in 2015 as the superintendent and last summer we completed a full renovation and renamed the course from the Olde course to the Fazio II, named after the architect Tommy Fazio.

**Year finished internship:** 2008

**Hometown in Australia:** Barooga, New South Wales.

**What do you miss most:** Family, meat pies, metric system.

**Best thing about living in the U.S.:** Better job opportunities, wife and kids.

## David Dore-Smith



**Age:** 43  
**Family:** wife, Christine; kids Brooke, 11, and Brady, 9.  
**Facility:** Copperleaf Golf Club, Bonita Springs.  
**Title:** Director of golf course and grounds maintenance.  
**Years at current facility:** 14  
**Year finished internship:** 1998. Arrived in the U.S. in 1997, 20 years ago this year.  
**Hometown in Australia:** Melbourne, Victoria.  
**What do you miss most:** Family, fresh food, meat pies, Aussie sports.

**Best thing about living in the U.S.:** Met my wife. Wonderful opportunities. Great friendships.

**Do you have a funny story about being an Aussie in the U.S.:** Driving to Orlando one day with some other Aussies, we stopped in at a McDonalds in the middle of the state. Girl behind the counter heard the accents and asked where we were from. We said Australia and she thought that was really cool but then asked if we drove here ... from Australia!! – True story.

## Blair Kirby



**Age:** 37  
**Family:** wife Erin Kirby, kids Macayle, 3, and Everett, 1.  
**Facility:** The Club at Admirals Cove, Jupiter.  
**Title:** Director of golf course maintenance.  
**Years at current facility:** 6.5  
**Year finished internship:** 2003  
**Hometown in Australia:** Narooma, NSW.  
**What do you miss most:** Sausages, Jatz crackers, Allens lollies.

**Best thing about living in the U.S.:** Getting to meet a lot of

great people and see some really cool things.

**Do you have a funny story about being an Aussie in the U.S.:** Working at a PGA Tour event and saw one of the Aussie players who had the colors of the same team I barrack for back home on his putter grip. When I said to him that “What a great team” he was caught off guard and we ended up talking for a couple of minutes.

## Brook Maxwell



**Age:** 42  
**Family:** fiancée, Jennifer, and sons Caleb, 18, and Aiden, 12.  
**Facility:** Pelican Marsh Golf Club, Naples.  
**Title:** Golf course superintendent.  
**Years at current facility:** 8  
**Year finished internship:** 1997  
**Hometown in Australia:** The Gold Coast, Queensland.  
**What do you miss most:** Friends and family.  
**Best thing about living in the U.S.:** The many opportunities for growth within our industry. It is not like that back home.

**Do you have a funny story about being an Aussie in the U.S.:** I still cannot talk to an automated phone service such as Comcast or FPL. It cannot decipher the accent so I always request to speak with an operator at the beginning of the phone call.

## Mark Reid



**Age:** Bloody old! Vintage '74.  
**Family:** wife, Denise; kids, Kendall, 20, Quinn, 18, and Billy, 13.  
**Facility:** The Breakers Resort, West Palm Beach.  
**Title:** Director of golf and grounds maintenance.  
**Years at current facility:** 14  
**Year finished internship:** 1996  
**Hometown in Australia:** Point Lonsdale, Victoria.  
**What do you miss most:** My family. Close second is the smoko's at work. Real bread and the best beer in the world.  
**Best thing about living in the**

**U.S.:** The opportunities that I have had. Having the tools to do the job. Being able to see and play some really amazing golf facilities.

**Do you have a funny story about being an Aussie in the U.S.:** Pretty sad, not really. Maxy (Brook Maxwell) and Taz (Matthew Tacilauskas) will have plenty.

## Matthew Tacilauskas



**Age:** 43  
**Family:** wife, Trish; son Justin.  
**Facility:** Palm Beach Country Club, Palm Beach.  
**Title:** Golf course superintendent.  
**Years at current facility:** 7  
**Year finished internship:** 1998  
**Hometown in Australia:** Cooma, NSW.  
**What do you miss most:** Going to the horse races.  
**Best thing about living in the U.S.:** Playing amazing golf courses on a regular basis.  
**Do you have a funny story about being an Aussie in the U.S.:** None that can be made public!

## James Trichter



**Age:** 39  
**Family:** wife, Mary; daughter, Adelaide, 7.  
**Facility:** The Concession Golf Club, Bradenton.  
**Title:** Assistant superintendent.  
**Years at current facility:** 5  
**Year graduated from Ohio State:** 2007  
**Hometown in Australia:** Ballina, NSW.  
**What do you miss most:** Friends and family.

**Best thing about living in the U.S.:** The access to new products, equipment and research. The industry is just so big here.

**Do you have a funny story about being an Aussie in the U.S.:** Not really, just when people hear the accent they instantly want to talk to you and it is a great conversation starter. ■



by Mark Jacobs

Mark Jacobs is proud of the new practice facility beneath his feet and the new clubhouse behind him.

## New Clubhouse and Range Provide SHOT IN THE ARM AT SHELL POINT

The saying goes, 'you never get a second chance to make a first impression.' I say that's not always the case, especially at The Club at Shell Point. The club - formerly Shell Point Golf Club - has certainly created a new first impression. We opened a \$14-million, 35,000 sq. ft. clubhouse at the end of last year, took on a new name and adopted a new logo. That would be impressive enough in and of itself but when you consider what the clubhouse used to be, well, you can understand why the new "first" impression is doubly breathtaking.

For 17 years the clubhouse and pro shop was a doublewide trailer. It was only ever intended to be temporary but you know what they say about "the best laid plans." I arrived at Shell Point at the end of 2005 and the Great Recession came pretty soon afterwards and things ground to a standstill in all kinds of industries all across the country.

A lot of businesses didn't survive and we've all read about the hundreds of courses that have since closed in the U.S. So, against that backdrop, there are a lot worse things than having a hot dog roller and a microwave for your snack bar. Now though, Shell Point has a facility that is truly state-of-the-art and the impact has been immediate and overwhelmingly positive.

The new clubhouse serves the Shell Point retirement community which is a 400-plus acre property with over 1,100 employees and about 2,400 residents making it the largest retirement community in Florida. The first nine holes of the golf course, designed by Gor-



An aerial view of the new clubhouse.

don Lewis, opened in 2000 and the second nine opened two years later. It is a semi-private facility.

Naturally, among members and community as a whole, there has been a lot of excitement about the new clubhouse which offers everything - restaurant, fitness, salon and spa - necessary for the full country club experience. The club has sold more than 50 new memberships since January. But there has been a real shot in the arm for those of who work at the club too.

I'm reluctant to say something was missing before but there is definitely a renewed sense of pride for me and our staff of 12. We have always worked hard to produce the best possible golf course conditions and it is exciting now to do that with a clubhouse that really helps set a first-class tone. I'd say the clubhouse has been great for morale because we have a sense of being part of something bigger whereas before it was just the golf course we had to show off.

I should also mention that we also have a new nine-acre practice facility straight across the road from the clubhouse. We have a one-acre driving range tee, an 8,500-sq.ft. practice putting green and a 7,000-sq.ft. chipping green and short game area. There may come a day when Shell Point becomes private but in the meantime the new practice facility has almost doubled the number of people using it.

One of them is Matt Fancher of Pinestraw of South Florida. Matt is a former superintendent in the Fort Myers area, and brings his son along to practice. To hear his reaction to the new facility and how we maintain it has been really heartening. Of course with so much traffic we have our work cut out for us. It is kind of ironic that over the years we have worked diligently to naturalize areas of the golf course, cutting back on maintenance on a total of about eight acres. Then, boom, all in one shot, we have put about the same amount back into the operation.

Still, we wouldn't have it any other way. The practice range and the clubhouse have helped energize everybody. I can tell from talking to members and to golfers just how encouraged they are by the improvements. Everything is really positive. We try and take all of that enthusiasm and channel it into the work we do as a golf course maintenance department.

It helps that the new clubhouse and new practice facility have come along at a time when I feel like we have the golf course in the best condition it's been. Situated where we are right on the tip of where San Carlos Bay meets the Caloosahatchee River we are constantly battling water with extremely high sodium content. We've tried a sulphur burner, fertigation, lots of gypsum and a lot of products from a lot of different vendors with some progress. But probably the best



The new nine-acre practice facility at Shell Point.

thing we did was convert our greens to Platinum paspalum in 2013. The paspalum has made an amazing difference.

There have been challenges with the grass, for one it is very mobile and in fact it is so inclined to move about the golf course that

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The new clubhouse is a far cry from the doublewide trailer that preceded it.

we may consider using it elsewhere on the course in place of the bermudagrass. But for now, that is still a pondering point. Overall though, the improvement of the greens and the course in general has been very steady. It's been great to hear positive feedback in weekly department head meetings that members are raving about the golf course.

And now that we have the clubhouse, there is a real push for us to show it off. It's very rewarding when your fellow department heads and managers want you to invite your peers to the facility. So I am looking forward to having the Calusa GCSA for an event and meeting at some point before too long.

While there is definitely a renewed sense of pride at Shell Point that is not to say we weren't proud before. Service has always been the hallmark of what the club offers and that has been top-of-the-line all along. Much of the credit for that has to go to our head golf pro Gary Keating. Gary is an accomplished player and teacher who is well regarded not just in southwest Florida but across the whole state. He is not a "yes" man but he never says no. Instead, he'll say "Let me see what I can do" and he usually finds a way to make it happen.

If there is one thing I have to admit that I've let fall through the cracks it's that I haven't had lunch at the clubhouse yet. There's been a lot going on. I'm not saying I'm too busy to eat lunch. I'll get up there one of these days before too long. I just haven't taken the time to make it happen yet. In the meantime though I'm getting plenty of nourishment out of what Shell Point has become and where it's heading. ■

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# IN THE NEWS



Excerpts from press coverage on people in the world of golf course maintenance in Florida.

## Darren Davis, CGCS

Olde Florida Golf Club

Naples Daily News, January 13

Olde Florida Golf Club has retained its designation as a certified Audubon cooperative sanctuary through the Audubon cooperative sanctuary program for golf courses, an Audubon International program. When originally certified in 1995, Olde Florida Golf Club was the fourth golf course in Florida and the 50th worldwide to achieve the designation. Olde Florida Golf Club is one of 110 courses in Florida and 892 courses in the world to hold the honor.

This year the recertification process, coordinated by Darren Davis, golf course superintendent, required a visit by a third party representative. Delphine Tseng, manager of member services at Audubon International, was given a tour of the course and sent her observations to Audubon International. "Olde Florida Golf Club has gone above and beyond with Audubon International's certification program. Mr. Davis uses every opportunity to promote the importance of wildlife habitat management," Tseng reported.

## Patrick Lewins

LaPlaya Golf Club

Naples Daily News, January 29

A Virginia opossum, a double-crested cormorant, a Florida snapping turtle, two Florida softshell turtles, six raccoons, seven eastern cottontails, a northern mockingbird, a great blue heron and a gopher tortoise were released this past week. Hospital staff would like to thank Brian Beckner, owner of Native Bird Boxes and LaPlaya Golf Club course superintendent Patrick Lewins for facilitating the gopher tortoise release. The tortoise had been found on Airport Road with only minor injuries sustained in a vehicle strike. Once the tortoise was cleared for release, LaPlaya Golf Club allowed Brian to release the tortoise on their property away from the dangers of the busy roadways.

## Steven Rauh

Sarasota County

Post-Journal, February 3

Prodigy Sports recently announced the placement of Steven Rauh, a Jamestown High School graduate and a member of the Red Raiders football team during the 1994-95 seasons, as Athletics and Sport Development Division Manager for Sarasota County (Florida) in Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources. Rauh will serve as administrative agent with over 50 athletic

leagues and organizations, coordinating with a variety of partners in support of sports tourism initiatives and leading a high performing team.

Rauh has spent the last 12 years growing in various golf course superintendent roles, from a smaller club like Del Tura to his previous role at The Golf Club of the Everglades, serving as director of agronomy. He spent five years with Del Tura Golf & Country Club as the golf course superintendent before being brought over to The Hideaway County Club. He then spent two and a half years with The Golf Lodge at The Quarry before being brought into his role with The Golf Club of the Everglades.

## Kevin Leo

Quail Creek Country Club

Naples Daily News, April 5

Quail Creek Country Club is getting closer to Collier County's first USGA close-up. The North Naples facility will become the first to host a United States Golf Association tournament when the U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur is played October 7-12.

"From the membership and the community, we're really starting to see the excitement and the enthusiasm," said Don Hunter, Quail Creek's general manager and chief operating officer. "Folks are getting behind us." Hunter said while there hasn't been much rain, that's actually played into the hands of the club and superintendent Kevin F. Leo a bit.

"The weather pattern, though it's a drought, it's given us control of the water," Hunter said. "Kevin's doing a fantastic job. The USGA is overjoyed with the current conditions. We're going to have a great championship."

Leo, who helped build Quail Creek back in 1981, then returned as superintendent four years ago, has soaked up the process of getting the club's two courses championship-ready.

"It's been fantastic and very enjoyable and eye-opening," said Leo, who oversaw renovation of both the Quail and Creek courses in 2013, with original designer Arthur Hills serving as a consultant.

"It's engaging our staff. This kind of brings everybody together when you have something coming on. We're all going to benefit, including the membership when we're done. After the championship is over, they're going to have themselves 36 holes of championship-quality golf." ■

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**Florida Threesome  
Attends Institute**



Tony Nysse and Syngenta's Stephanie Schwenke.



Asa High

Brandon Richey

Three Florida GCSA members were among 26 golf course superintendents from across the country to graduate from the latest Syngenta Business Institute. Asa High from Adena Club in Ocala, Tony Nysse from Old Marsh Golf Club in Palm Beach Gardens and Brandon Richey from Lake Nona Golf and Country Club in Orlando completed the three-day program in December. SBI is a professional development program for golf course superintendents hosted by Syngenta and the Wake Forest University School of Business in Winston-Salem, NC.

"We offer this program to superintendents as a commitment to our customers and their development in the industry," says Stephanie Schwenke, Syngenta's golf market manager. "At the Syngenta Business Institute, we focus on the business aspect of superintendents' responsibilities, rather than agronomics, and really work to hone their skills in leadership and management, which is just as important as managing turf quality."

During the program, participants gained knowledge in financial and human resources management, negotiation skills, effective communication techniques, managing generational differences and more. Classes were led by professors from the School of Business at Wake Forest University, who provided ideas and tools to assist superintendents in their daily management and long-term planning.

High, Nysse and Richey were selected from a talented pool of superintendents across the country based on an application process that reviewed their educational background, professional achievements and an essay on why they should be selected for the program.

**Leaders Brainstorm  
For Chapter Health**



Nick Kearns, Jennifer Bryan and Ralph Dain, CGCS do their best to keep Old Tom Morris warm outside GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence, KS.

The Florida GCSA's pioneering BMP program drew considerable praise at GCSAA's annual chapter leaders symposium in Lawrence, KS in March. Florida GCSA board member Nick Kearns from The Oaks Club says the Florida GCSA was "several years ahead" of what is now a push to establish formal BMPs for golf course maintenance operations across the country.

"Our record on BMPs and our certification program is a real feather in our cap," Kearns says. "I think everyone at the symposium is aware of the work we did ahead of the curve and in helping establish the national template. It's something our members can be very proud of."

Kearns was accompanied by executive director Jennifer Bryan and GCSAA's field staffer in Florida Ralph Dain, CGCS when he made the trek to GCSAA headquarters for the two-day event. He had been to Lawrence before as a chapter delegate but this was his first time interacting directly with administrators of other chapters.

"I got a lot out of it. The chance to meet with all kinds of people with so many different ways of going about things really gets

your mind working on alternatives for your own chapter," he says. "And it also helps me at my own facility. Invariably you pick up something along the way that influences what you do. Just mixing with these folks you pick up ideas and perspectives that can help."

**Broken Sound Wins  
New Green Award**

Mirimichi Green Express, co-owned by entertainer and "green" golf advocate Justin Timberlake and Russ Britton, recognized Broken Sound Club with its inaugural Mirimichi Green Sustainable Program Member Award. In honor of Broken Sound Club's eco-leadership, Mirimichi donated soil products to the City of Boca Raton for use on its public green spaces.

Britton says Broken Sound was selected because it serves as a "defining best practice example of all that is dynamic and beneficial about leading golf course sustainability using Mirimichi's products." Shannon Easter is golf course maintenance director and environmental consultant at Broken Sound. He recently received GCSAA's major Environmental Leader in Golf Award.

"Broken Sound Club is taking the golf industry in the right direction and exemplifying how natural and sustainable products can work better than the harsh alternatives," Britton says. "Keeping the environment as a priority in any maintenance program is what we are all about and that is why we, at Mirimichi Green, have presented this award."

**Howard Adjusts Leadership**

Howard Fertilizer and Chemical Company announces a reorganization of its services to the agricultural and turf industries. Dwight Kummer will serve as president, Jared Revell will serve as the director of the ag. division and key accounts, Donovan Sykes will serve as the ag. division business manager and Jay Fountain will serve as the director of turf and ornamental Sales outside of Florida.

**Members Take on  
Grassroots Roles**

Two more Florida GCSA members have signed on to GCSAA's Grassroots Ambassadors program that helps advocate for golf in legislative and regulatory arenas. Sean O'Brien, CGCS from The Ritz-Carlton Members Club and David Robinson, CGCS from Marriott Golf joined the program with this year's spring intake. Recruitment is underway for the summer class of ambassadors who will start the program on July 1. To learn more visit Advocacy section of GCSAA.org.

**Recently Recertified**

Congratulations to the following individuals who recently completed recertification requirements with GCSSA: Robert R. Bittner, CGCS Club Pelican Bay; Jeffrey Burgoyne, CGCS Legends Golf and Country Club; Matt P. Gaudet, CGCS The Forest Country Club; Chip Lewinson, CGCS Saddlebrook Resort; Greg Plotner, CGCS International Golf Maintenance; Todd A. Ronske, CGCS Howard Fertilizer; Jason S. Ward, CGCS; Shane Wright, CGCS Vero Beach Country Club;



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**FAU Study Shows Golf Good for Home Prices**

While golf courses around the country face an uncertain economic future, homes adjacent to them continue to command higher prices from prospective buyers, according to a new study of real estate transactions in South Florida by faculty at Florida Atlantic University.

Looking at more than 10,000 transactions from properties in Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties that sold and closed in 2015, the researchers at FAU conclude that having a property adjacent to a golf course adds between eight percent and 12 percent to property value on average.

“Preliminary results from statistical pricing models suggest that properties receive a pricing boost,” said Ken Johnson, Ph.D., a real estate economist and an associate dean of graduate programs and professor in FAU’s College of Business. “Thus, there is strong evidence to conclude that golf courses remain a positive draw to potential property owners.”

With more than 800 golf courses closing in the United States in the last decade, residents, developers and municipal officials around the country are facing decisions on whether to convert

underperforming golf properties to housing developments or keep them as golfing communities.

“The strong statistical evidence supporting a pricing boost for being adjacent to a golf course should help property owners, developers and city officials make quicker and more financial fair decisions,” said Ksenija Bogosavljevic, a graduate student who’s working with Johnson on the study as part of ongoing research on the viability of golf course communities.

In South Florida, Johnson acknowledged that there are many golf courses trying to decide whether or not to continue in the face of failing financial performance. Many golf properties are declining into a state of repair that could negatively impact adjacent property values. On the other hand, the remaining demand for golf and being adjacent to courses could create a market scenario whereby being adjacent to a course could actually add a premium to property value, on average, he added.

“Uncertainty over value destroys deals, and these findings reduce that uncertainty and should result in quicker resolutions one way or another,” said Johnson, coauthor of the Beracha, Hardin & Johnson Buy vs. Rent (BH&J) Index. “In the end, no one wants a vacant course.”

**Writing Award Named In Honor of Jackson**



Joel Jackson, CGCS

The Florida GCSA is instituting a new annual award for the best member authored article in The Florida Green. The award will be known as the Joel Jackson Award in honor of one of the association’s best known leaders who retired to California in 2015.

Jackson spent 20 years with Walt Disney World either side of a three-year stint as superintendent at Isleworth Golf and Country Club in Windermere.

He joined the board of the Florida GCSA and served as president in 1989-90. After retiring as a superintendent in 1998, he became communications director and, in 2007, executive director until 2013. He was editor The Florida Green from 1990 until 2015. He was recognized with the association’s Distinguished Service Award in 1992.

“For so long, Joel was like the engine of the car,” Florida GCSA past-president Bill Davidson, CGCS said when Jackson retired. “You don’t see it. You just get in the car and drive knowing it’s going to take you where you want to go. Joel was instrumental in bringing the Florida GCSA to prominence with the things he did that you guys never got to see. He shepherded us into the era we enjoy today.”

**Harrell’s Commits Major Gift to EIFG**

Harrell’s has pledged \$250,000 over five years to GCSAA’s philanthropic organization, the Environmental Institute for Golf, to support priority initiatives of advocacy, environmental programs and best management practices.

“We are committed to long-term support for golf course superintendents and the promotion of the fine work that they do,” says Jack R. Harrell, Jr., chairman and chief executive officer of the Florida-based company. “Together we can show the full benefits of the golf industry while helping to grow a better world.”

This latest pledge extends the company’s long-standing support of the EIFG and GCSAA superintendents. The company donated more than \$300,000 over the past nine years. The current pledge lifts Harrell’s to status in the EIFG Star Club, with cumulative donations between \$500,000 and \$999,999. In addition, Jack R. Harrell, Jr. previously served on the EIFG advisory council.



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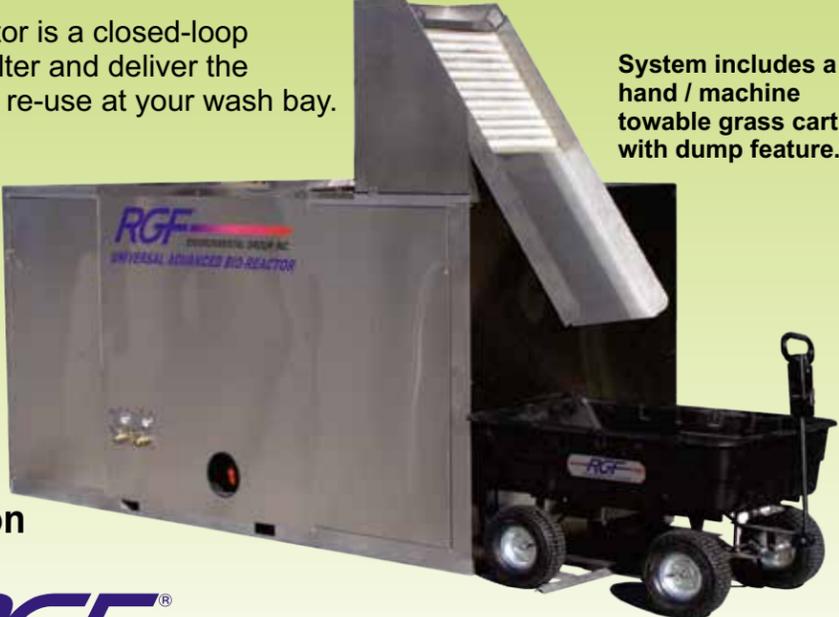
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## Beware the Spread of Fertilizer Ordinances

I can hear the clock ticking toward my deadline for submitting this piece for The Florida Green and as the deadline gets closer the ticking seems to get louder! I am also distracted by the family of four flying their kite outside my office window. ... These are sure signs that I am suffering from a little case of writer's block as I attempt to keep the Florida GCSA membership informed of the issues that are currently in play.



Ralph Dain, CGCS

That kite is amazing. It's been flying for about an hour but it is not enough of a distraction to keep me from relaying my concerns about a troubling trend that is slowly making its way around the state. I am not sure everyone is aware, but several fertilizer ordinances are being revisited and the outcomes do not always favor the turfgrass industry.

Most recently, Seminole County passed an ordinance calling for a summertime ban on fertilizer use from June to September. Unfortunately, for professional landscapers there is no exemption. However, golf did manage to garner an exemption thanks to our ongoing Best Management Practices program.

There is also a trend in some of these ordinances towards enacting bans in winter. For example, in Citrus County homeowners may not fertilize from November through March. Again, we in the golf industry have been fortunate to be exempt from these ordinances as well but it will only take one instance for a county or municipality to refuse golf an exemption and then the proverbial stuff is going to hit the fan! Can you imagine what the ramifications would be if you were not able to fertilize on your golf course from November through March? That thought scares me more than just a little.

There is an instance of an ordinance being passed without an exemption for golf. The City of Stuart which has no golf courses within the city limits does have an ordinance without exempting golf.

Their ordinance calls for a blackout period from June 1 through September 30 for any fertilizer containing nitrogen or phosphorous. So what, you might ask, since there are no golf courses within the city limits. The concern is that verbiage for an ordinance in one area is often duplicated in other areas and if there happen to be golf courses in that jurisdiction it will become an entirely different ball game.

Between the Florida GCSA government relations committee and EREF, we are fortunate to have a pretty good network that does as much as possible to inform members about upcoming legislation. But it becomes imperative that individuals from the localities where the ordinances are being discussed get involved. Those are the voices that need to counter the traveling activists that are out to halt the way we maintain our golf courses and other turf areas.

Often at these hearings our industry is outnumbered by 50 to 60 people. When the message is so one sided, it should not come as a surprise that these ordinances are passing almost unanimously.

It is time for our membership to gather at these hearings and represent our side of the story. Better yet, we need to establish relationships with those individuals that are making these decisions long before things get to that point. This is the essence of GCSAA's Grassroots Ambassador program and it needs to be duplicated at the local level to protect our industry from unsubstantiated claims of our culpability in the negative impacts on Florida's waterways.

One last point on this issue: if you have not already become certified in the Florida GCSA's BMP program, I would strongly encourage you to do so. This is a great way to demonstrate that the members of the Florida GCSA are aware of and are adhering to the practices that have been instrumental in keeping golf exempt from the onerous fertilizer restrictions that could adversely impact the way you maintain your golf courses.

My family's success with the kite was subject to the changing winds. Don't leave your ability to use fertilizers in an efficient and environmentally sound manner so up in the air. ■

*-Ralph Dain is GCSAA regional representative in Florida. You can reach at (785) 424-4306 or rdain@gcsaa.org.*



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