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ON THE COVER:

In a loud and hectic age, Mike Stevens is creating an impressive record with his calm leadership for Billy Casper Golf.



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Your Florida GCSA Thrives On Behind the Scenes Work

This is the last article that I'll be writing as president of the Florida GCSA. I want to thank the board of directors, our executive committee, our executive director Jennifer Bryan and our magazine editor Trent Bouts for their hard work. They made my year at the helm seem like a very short and easy one.

There is so much that goes on behind the scenes in an association like ours. Much of it is work that most members never get to hear about but they do benefit from it. That leads me to also offer thanks to another group, our past-presidents. Those I never served with each made a contribution that led to me getting my chance on my chance on the board and those I did serve with each had their own way of running things. I learned something from each and every one.

Over my eight years on the board I got to witness and play some role in a bunch of good things to come out of the Florida GCSA. One of the best was undoubtedly our BMP manual and the BMP certification program that followed. No one will ever truly appreciate the amount of work Mark Kann and several others put in over a long period of time. GCSAA's Excellence in Government Relations Award in 2015 was some acknowledgment, but as far as I'm concerned this program will be an award winner for years to come.

The next few years are likely to also involve more talk and maybe some action on the subject of chapter consolidation. Personally, I'm in favor of plans along these lines if they ever get going. It was tried on the West Coast but didn't seem to work out. The way I look at it, if there is a struggling chapter that the members don't want to join and participate with then what you have is a dying chapter. So much has changed in the way we do business since these chapters were formed. I think it's reasonable to expect that there should be some changes amongst the chapters to go along with that evolution.

Of course the challenge will be in finding the right formula and balance that best serves the members. I encourage everyone to put on their thinking caps and at least be open to considering new ideas.

In the past I have challenged everyone to get involved in their chapters, whether it is serving time on the board, hosting a meeting or just volunteering for a committee in some capacity. It is rewarding to give back to your profession by doing something more than simply getting the job done day after day. I can tell you from personal experience that you will be better for it.

In closing thanks everyone. It has been an awesome time serving the people who make up the Florida GCSA. ■



Ricky Reeves



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Working to Make Sense Of the Issues that Matter



Jennifer Bryan

Florida weather is not always predictable. We have had a very warm and dry winter. So dry, that during Florida Golf Day in Tallahassee there was much concern about brush fires. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services was recommending that people not pull over on the side of the road for fear that sparks from their engine could start a brush fire. At the time, there were many out of control fires throughout the state. Even in my own neck of the woods, Martin County was battling several blazes along I-95 and the turnpike.

Also during this time, the Water Management Districts were initiating their conservation measures putting Phase 1 and Phase 2 restrictions into effect. In an effort to get all

Water Managements Districts on the same page, the Florida GCSA appealed for consistency among the districts and for all districts to adopt a percentage reduction versus a day of the week reduction. Superintendents can often do a lot more with less water if they are allowed to apply it when it is most beneficial to the plant. Florida GCSA director Andy Jorgensen from On Top of the World has done a great job leading this effort. (See story page 22)

And wouldn't you know, as soon as we initiated the conversation, the rains came. And did they come. My newspaper this morning noted 11.3 inches of rain in Stuart since June 1 – that's in less than three weeks. I know many of you have had much more and this impacts your ability to manage renovations, airify and perform other summer maintenance. It is important to note here that according to GCSAA's survey, water use on golf courses in the southeast is down 32 percent so far this year.

Of course there has also been a lot of activity with regard to fertilizer ordinances across the state. This is an issue we are constantly monitoring and working to do all we can to ensure that decisions are based on science instead of perception and emotion. That said, ordinances are in place and will continue to be imposed and updated from time to time. One tool that will help superintendents stay in compliance is the new mobile app developed by our friends at the University of Florida IFAS Extension. (See story page 40)

On another front, I had the opportunity of touring the Tampa Bay seawater desalination plant in early June. Like anything new and innovative, this plant had its own controversy but has been able to persevere and provide drinking water to counties in the Tampa Bay area during the dry season. Other new ideas are being tested; deep well injections and containment ponds. None are without debate. Lake Okeechobee discharges are a constant hot topic as well as the Basin Management Program.

As unpredictable as the Florida weather may be, it is safe to say that at some point we will have another season with similar impacts as this one. Water will continue to be an issue and restrictions will be implemented. And we will continue our conversations with the Water Management Districts.

It will be our goal to work with the districts to implement new language so we will be a step ahead and help the districts achieve the conservation they seek. Your Florida GCSA will continue to measure the pulse of all these activities and continue to initiate new conversations that stress your environmental stewardship and conservation efforts in balance with your role of producing quality golf course conditions. ■

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CHAPTER ROUND UP

NORTH FLORIDA

Thanks to everyone who participated in our Benevolent Tournament at the Creek Course at Hammock Dunes in Palm Coast in May. We raised more than \$2,700 for our benevolent fund which is a very worthy cause.

Thanks to Matt Howes and Matt Jones for hosting this tournament. It was a beautiful day with lunch provided by Gary James of Howard Fertilizer and Jason Mulcahy of FMC. Beverages were provided by Jayce Ramage of Pro Plus and Chris McCranie of Upstart Products.

Our low net winner was Bob Solms and Rick Herman won low gross. Skins were won by Jayce Ramage, Tom Price, Andy Jorgensen, CGCS, Rick Herman, Paul Hoffman and Jack Crevaling.

Another worthy cause is the Florida GCSA turfgrass research fund and we were proud to donate \$5,000 to the fund in May. Thanks to our representative on the state board, David Hillhouse, for passing the check on.

Mid-June we had our second annual fishing tournament with weigh-in at the Conch House in St. Augustine. We had 17 boats head out with 48 fishermen. The weather was great without any rain and everyone had a wonderful time. Derek Byrnes of Aquatic Systems was the winner of biggest redfish with a 27-inch catch. The boat skippered by Scott Franklin from Debray Golf and Country Club won the calcutta. All proceeds from this tournament will also go into the benevolent fund.

Registration is now open for the Fall Classic at Amelia Island Plantation which is September 22-24 this year. Don't forget to book your room by August 7 to receive the discounted hotel room rate. In December we head to South Hampton Golf Club for our Christmas Tournament.

- Betty Hooten.



Our president, Nate Maurer from Jacksonville Golf and Country Club.



Bob Jones of Ewing Irrigation with two good reasons to smile.



Scott Franklin from Debray Golf and Country Club with Lance Dollar and Jared Dollar, crew members from the boat that won the Calcutta. Jack Tennant, absent, was also on the crew.



Al Clements from Pablo Creek Golf Club.



Florida GCSA president Ricky Reeves accepts a check for \$5,000 for the turfgrass research fund from the North Florida GCSA's David Hillhouse from Bent Creek Golf Club.

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Special thanks to Scott MacPhee and the entire staff at Sailfish Point Golf Club
for hosting an outstanding event.

CHAPTER ROUND UP

SEVEN RIVERS

The Seven Rivers continued to have a busy meeting schedule over the past few months. The 25th annual Jeff Hayden Memorial Envirotron Golf Classic was a tremendous success with over 280 participants. Many thanks go out to our sponsors, players, volunteers and most importantly David Court, CGCS at World Woods and his staff for immaculate golf course conditions.

Our May meeting was our second annual camping trip at Grand Lake Resort in Citra. We had an excellent turnout for both the golf and camping. Many thanks to Nathan Florian of Bronson Turf Solutions for sponsoring the low country boil and to Rick Kerr, host superintendent for the fun course set-up. This event continues to grow and become a nice break from the normal routine that we are all used to.

The annual meeting was in June at Candler Hills Golf Club in Ocala. The tradition

with this meeting is to honor our industry vendors and we had nearly 40 vendors in attendance this day. Golf was fun and exciting as the group teed off from the forward tees allowing for a unique set-up that sped up play before the afternoon thunderstorms rolled in. Many stuck around after and gathered at the local watering hole for friendship and camaraderie that evening.

We would like to welcome Asa High from Adena Golf Club as a new director on the Seven Rivers GCSA board. Asa brings with him a wealth of knowledge and has been an active participant in the chapter for the past few years. We are looking forward to Asa's leadership and guidance over the next few years.

- Andy Jorgensen, CGCS On Top of the World.



Billy Browning of King Ranch with the Browning shotgun he won at the Envirotron.



Team Toro was represented at the Envirotron by Tina Nuezil, Chris Anderson, Taylor Eli and Ron Bear.

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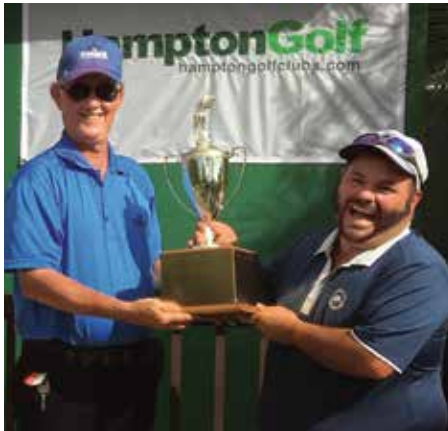
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CENTRAL FLORIDA



Central Florida GCSA president Terry Stephenson presents the trophy to chapter golf champion Chris Zinna.



Terry Stephenson with Jennie Williams, wife of the late Danny Williams, and Jacob Albright, a family friend who is now taking care of the golf course at Mount Dora.

First off, I want to thank my fellow board members and members of the Central Florida GCSA for getting behind the family of a superintendent friend we lost this spring. Danny Williams was the superintendent for seven of the 13 years he was at Mount Dora Golf Club in Mount Dora. Danny was diagnosed with esophageal cancer last October then was involved in a bad car accident in December. He was unable to return to work and died in May.

Danny was one of those superintendents whose budget didn't allow him to be a formal member of our chapter and GCSAA. That price can be steep for superintendents at some facilities, which is all the more reason I am proud to say that our chapter didn't hesitate in making a donation of \$1,500 to Danny's family. We are also grateful that the Florida GCSA matched that donation. The bonds we share in this profession are strong indeed.

In other news of late, congratulations to Chris Zinna from Mayfair Country Club on winning our golf championship. Chris shot a round of 70 at Stonegate Golf Club at Solivita in Kissimmee where we enjoyed great conditions and a great day thanks to host superintendent Dave Bell. It was a big day for Chris who was also elected to our board of directors before the golf championship and also won the \$500 door prize. Rob Torri from Orange Tree Golf Club in Orlando was runner-up with a 75.

I also want to wish Josh Kelley from Hawk's Landing Golf Club all the best as

our new president. Our vice-president is Mike Gay from Winter Pines Golf Club and secretary is David Robinson from Marriott Golf. I'll serve as past-president. Other directors along with Chris Zinna are Tom Alex, Alex Golf Services; Chris Flynn, Bay Hill Club and Lodge and Mitch Leininger, Shingle Creek Golf Club.

Our assistant superintendent representative on the board is Bryce Gibson from Interlachen Country Club and our affiliate representatives are Thomas Trammell of Wedgworth's and Kevin Wasilewski of Syngenta.

Some dates to keep in mind are our member-only tournament and presentation to Arnie's Army at Bay Hill Club on September 18 and our member-vendor appreciation event at Mayfair Country Club on October 13. Of course don't forget the Crowfoot Open at Grand Cypress Golf Club on December 15.

While we're talking about the Crowfoot, let me acknowledge the incredible contribution that Tom Alex made to this event and to the profession over his long tenure at Grand Cypress. Tom has now retired but has graciously agreed to continue to help running the tournament which is the biggest event on our calendar each year. We all wish you well Tom and congratulate you on an outstanding career.

- Terry Stephenson, *The Monarch at Royal Highlands.*



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CHAPTER ROUND UP

TREASURE COAST



Jackson Reiswig, Matt Fancher, Sean Anderson and Lance Allen won the net division.



Steve Anderson, Roy MacDonald, John Foy and Rob Kloska were gross winners at the Blue Pearl.

Thanks to Scott MacPhee and the entire staff at Sailfish Point Golf Club for hosting the 24th annual Blue Pearl Charity Golf Tournament. We had 33 teams compete and the gross division winners were Steve Anderson, Roy MacDonald, John Foy and Rob Kloska. Jackson Reiswig, Matt Fancher, Sean Anderson and Lance Allen were on the winning net division team. Scott MacPhee also

ended up a victor as the winner of the Bayer Pack in our auction thanks to Brian MacCurrach.

Scott Bell was returned as president at our annual meeting at Riomar Country Club in Vero Beach in June. Thanks to Dennis Croumie as host superintendent.



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SUNCOAST

Our inaugural Summer Slam proved to be a hit with nearly 60 people taking part at Esplanade Golf and Country Club in Lakewood Ranch in June. The event was a fun format that pitted turf growers, which is to say superintendents and assistants, against turf suppliers - vendors. The contest was played with two-man teams and I'm proud to say the turf growers came out on top comfortably.

Regardless of the result, the format was very enjoyable and superintendents and vendors got to spend a lot of quality time together. We also had two equipment technicians on the turf growers' team which was great to see as we try and bring these guys into our association. Many thanks to Rob Buege, our host superintendent, for a wonderful day.

At press time we were looking forward to heading out to see the Tampa Bay Rays take on the Baltimore Orioles in late July. Transportation was being provided with a pre-game party thrown in as well. Our next golfing event is at The Ritz-Carlton Members Club on September 11.

Good luck to Mike McNamara with his renovation project on the Club Course at TPC Prestancia this summer. The course is expected to reopen in October. We hope the weather cooperates with that schedule. It certainly has been up and down, with drought for the first part of the year followed by some very heavy rains. We had 14 inches over two and a half weeks



The victorious turfgrowers' team and their trophy from the Summer Slam.



The turf suppliers might have lost the tournament but they kept their smiles.

at Pelican Pointe Golf and Country Club compared with two inches from October up to that point.

- Dan Haubein, Pelican Pointe Golf and Country Club.

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CHAPTER ROUND UP

EVERGLADES



Will McClelland of Jacobsen, Mike Strube from Feather Sound Country Club, Gregory Jack from Treviso Bay, Jeff Barrett of E-Z-Go and Ryan Dillinger from West Bay Club.



Ronnie Rooks of Pinestraw of South Florida and Don Abell from Tara Golf and Country Club enjoyed their time at The POA.



Wayne Kapauuff, CGCS from Island Country Club follows an approach shot watched by team-mate and son, Kyle.

The Everglades GCSA recently hosted the 2017 POA Annual Golf Classic and G.C. Horn Memorial Tournament. The extended weekend of activity was another success with record turnouts for golf and a luau. Returning to the Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club was a big attraction for many to see the renovated golf club. Thank you and congratulations Holden Jones, superintendent at Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club on a successful renovation and a great job as our host for the POA.

Friday's G.C. Horn produced a packed golf course with a record 144 players. Scott Davis and Adam Varney took team gross honors (62) while Mark Metzger and Frank Tropfenbau won first net (53.6). Saturday's four man-scramble was dominated by the team Glase - Jim, Jeff, and Jimmy - along with Tim Denton.

The stroke play championship also took place Saturday morning at The County Club of Naples. As always superintendent Billy Davidson had the course in phenomenal shape. Daren Zendt took top honors in the superintendent division shooting 70 while Chris Anderson took top honors in the vendor division with a 69.

Next year we will return to the Naples Beach Club and if it is anything like this year, get the date on your calendar early and sign up as these spots go fast.

The Country Club of Naples was kind enough to invite the association back a month later as they hosted an assistant superintendent meeting. Wesco Turf was generous, as always, to sponsor the event free of charge for all assistants who attended. All who showed up were fortunate to hear Tom Wallace, CCM of Kopplin Kuebler and Wallace. Tom spoke on several topics in the spirit of preparing everyone for their next opportunity.

At press time, we were getting ready for our annual meeting at Quail Creek Country Club with hosts Jose Garcia and Matt Clem. The meeting in Mid-July marks the end of the year for us. Please remember to fill out your renewal forms to sign back up as a member of the Everglades GCSA or go online to the state website and sign up there. Already a member of another chapter? With your state dues paid it is only another \$25 to register with a second chapter and join in all the activities they have to offer.

The annual meetings also marked the changing of the guard for our board. So when you see him, please thank outgoing president Stuart Bothe for his service and dedication. Also, thanks to Bryce Koch who has ended his service on the board as his term as past-president is now over.

- Tyler Casey, West Bay Golf Club.



Mark Henderson of Upstart Products and Peter Brooks, CGCS from The Everglades Club either side of a mystery guest from MRI Underwater Specialists at The POA.



Tyler Casey, standing, from West Bay Golf Club, Eric Simpson from Fiddlesticks Country Club, and Cisco Navas, right, from Cypress Woods Country Club process raffle tickets at The POA.

PALM BEACH

We have enjoyed a couple of very special events in recent months beginning with the 37th annual Future of Golf Tournament at Eastpointe Country Club early June. We had 160 participants turn out including our wonderful volunteers. The event netted close to \$40,000 which will help support scholarships, The First Tee of the Palm Beaches and turfgrass research that benefits everyone within our industry.

I think it's fair to say everyone had a great day and we were extremely fortunate that the weather cooperated for as long as it did. With an 80 chance of rain forecast and precipitation falling all around us we were very happy to get through 15 holes and be able to score the event before we started getting too wet. Congratulations to our winning team of Robert Anderson, Frank McKee, Kevin Fipps and Dennis Morgan.

We enjoyed a Bloody Mary bar in the morning, music playing from loud speakers all day, as well as an on-course fish taco station, pork sliders station, a corn hole contest, putting contest, traditional hot dog stand, numerous giveaways and great raffle prizes. We raised more than \$4,000 from the raffle alone. Thank you to Bayer and Brian MacCurrach for the Bayer Power Pack donation and a sincere thanks to everyone else who contributed whether as a volunteer, prize donor, player, sponsor or any other capacity.

It takes a lot of commitment from a lot of people to pull together an event of this magnitude. As host superintendent I have been fortunate enough to serve with some wonderful people over years and want to thank them all including this year's committee members, Deron Zendt our chairman, Steve Pearson, John Baughman, John Swaner, Karl Schmidt, Jim Ratigan, Frank McKee, George Kervern, Parker Ferren, Brett Sanderson, Bill Rayside and Marty Griffin.

While we are on the subject of thanks, let's also acknowledge the great work of Steve Wright, CGCS chairman, Tom DeYoung, Dave Tandy, Alex Kagnus and Mike McDaniel in putting together the



Robert Anderson, Andrew Thornton, Joseph DiPrima and Andrew McMechan won Royal Palm Yacht and Country Club's marathon of golf tournament that raised more than \$13,000.



Sheree and Steve Wright, CGCS from Pine Tree Golf Club with part of their catch.

16th annual Palm Beach GCSA fishing tournament. I'm fortunate to serve on this committee as well so I have a good understanding of the time and energy these guys put in.

We had 20 boats compete this year, the highest number in some time and as Steve Wright says, "Everyone had a blast." Congratulations to all our winners and especially "GetSum" and captain Craig Maret of Green Way Turf Programs as the winning boat. Thanks also to the folks at Blowing Rocks Marina for allowing us to host our event there.

We also want to note the efforts of the folks from Royal Palm Yacht and Country Club for raising \$13,000 in the marathon of golf that supports scholarships for employees and their families. What a great effort in support of a great cause.

-John Spiwak, Eastpointe Country Club.



Winning boat crew members Jay Paholchek from Ironhorse Country Club, Jason Schoonover from Windsor Country Club, Matt Attwood, Craig Maret of Green Way Turf and Bill Moon.



Dennis Morgan, Robert Anderson, Frank McKee and Kevin Fipps were winners of the 37th annual Future of Golf Tournament

CHAPTER ROUND UP

RIDGE

The Ridge GCSA had the most successful Jack Harrell Sr. Ridge Invitational to date this past April and wanted to thank all participants and Grasslands Golf and Country Club for a great event. Whether you are a chapter member, affiliate, vendor or sponsor your participation and or donation made it all possible. The bulk of our proceeds will benefit The First Tee and Boys and Girls Clubs of Lakeland in efforts to invest in our local youth and perpetuate the game of golf.

At press time we were looking forward to our annual roundtable discussion hosted at the recently renovated Southern Dunes Golf and Country Club in Haines City. We planned to discuss the benefits of chapter affiliation, continuing education, wrapping up our annual calendar with all of that followed by a highly-anticipated round of golf. In efforts to attract, retain and grow our membership we want to hear attendees' opinions on how the chapter can

better serve current and future members. Our goal is to bring value to our members and the facilities they represent.

Vendors are welcome to attend most Ridge GCSA events these days when they accompany a superintendent or assistant. This policy has been well received and we appreciate the vendors who make the effort to help with participation and Ridge GCSA membership growth on the grassroots level.

Lastly, the Ridge GCSA would like to commend its chapter superintendents, golf professionals and club managers for an outstanding amount of participation in this year's Rounds4Research campaign. The state was well represented in the event and the Ridge GCSA participation was at an all-time high.

- Adam Ellison, Grasslands Golf and Country Club.

WEST COAST



Florida GCSA president Ricky Reeves accepts a check for \$2,500 from Florida West Coast GCSA's Andy Neiswender towards the state turfgrass research fund..

In April, the Florida West Coast GCSA board of directors held a strategic planning session with Ralph Dain and Steve Randall from GCSAA. The goal of the session was to establish strategic goals for the chapter as well as review the mission and vision statement. The board is looking to increase member participation by determining what is most important and valuable from a local chapter for today's superintendent.

We also discussed the importance of assistant superintendent participation and what value they get from belonging to a local chapter. Following the lead of GCSAA, our chapter is also looking to implement an equipment manager membership category. This would include an equipment manager board position as well as education and events geared toward equipment managers. I understand the Florida GCSA is also weighing the merits of potentially opening the door to equipment managers as members.

Overall the strategic planning session was a success and many of the ideas discussed are in the process of being incorporated into our operating procedures. The most critical element for increasing membership was determined to be communication and outreach. The board is hoping to visit all member courses over the following year and reach out to superintendents in the area.

We want to follow our new mission and

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vision statements which read - Mission statement: The Florida West Coast GCSA is a community of professionals serving the golf course management industry in the greater Tampa Bay area. Vision Statement: Trusted network of leaders in the turf management industry. We are hoping to grow this community and be a resource for all superintendents in the Tampa Bay area.

As a result of our experience, the Florida West Coast GCSA board highly recommends other local chapters consider setting up their own strategic planning session. It is great to review operating procedures, focus on goals for the chapter and help recognize the role and identity of the local chapter.

Early June we hosted our annual meeting at Saddlebrook Resort in Wesley Chapel. Host superintendent Chip Lewison had the Palmer Course in excellent condition and despite a bit of rain we got in all 18 holes and it was an excellent day. Florida GCSA executive director Jennifer Bryan attended to update members on the latest happenings at the state level. We thank her for attending.

A month earlier we were able to donate \$2,500 to the Florida GCSA turfgrass research fund. Thanks to our representative on the state board, Andy Neiswender from Belleair Country Club for delivering the check for this very worthy cause.

Also at the annual meeting, we elected a new board of directors:

President, Eric Dixon, Chi Chi Rodriguez Golf Club; vice-president, Brian Mortillaro, Hunter's Green Country Club; secretary-treasurer, Chris Senior, The Pelican Golf Club; immediate past-president, Kevin Sunderman, Isla Del Sol Yacht and Country Club. Directors, Ryan Franklin, St. Petersburg Country Club; Mickey Subotic, Tampa Palms. Vendor representative, Chad Nixon, Golf Ventures.

- Eric Dixon, Chi Chi Rodriguez Golf Club.

CALUSA



Brad Caporini from Old Corkscrew Golf Club with Greg Kriesch from Heritage Palms Golf and Country Club and his new Bushnell rangefinder.



New Calusa GCSA president Jake Wentz presents past-president Mark Jacobs with a plaque of appreciation for his service.



Jake Wentz with Trevor Brinkmeyer of Rain Bird, a Calusa GCSA platinum level sponsor.



Jake Wentz with David Ackley of Harrell's, a Calusa GCSA platinum level sponsor.

Congratulations to our new president Jack Wentz from Verandah Club on his election at our annual meeting at Kelly Greens Golf and Country Club in June. He will be ably supported over his two-year term by vice-president Mitch Miller from The Dunes Golf and Tennis Club, secretary Brad Caporini from Old Corkscrew Golf Club and treasurer John Vuknic from Stoneybrook Golf Club. Thanks to Mark Thomas, our host at Kelly Greens.

Congratulations also to Greg Kriesch Heritage Palms Golf and Country Club won a Bushnell rangefinder in a drawing for those who supported this year's Rounds4Research auction by donating a tee-time.

Our third annual Golf for Children Christmas Classic raised more than \$30,000. This will enable the Calusa GCSA to sponsor one more house with additional children that the Childrens Network of South Florida has acquired, for this upcoming year. This is a wonderful cause and we are grateful for all the support that our members and vendors provide.

At press time we were looking forward to our visit to Plantation Golf and Country Club on July 21 for a four-man scramble followed by a family night watching the Fort Myers Miracle baseball team at Hammond Stadium.

-Mark Jacobs, Shell Point Golf Club. ■



A view over Lake Nona Golf and Country Club which attracted the highest bid of any facility in Florida during the 2017 Rounds4Research auction.

Research Auction Grows WITH UNITED APPROACH

The Florida GCSA generated close to \$20,000 at this year's Rounds4Research auction to raise money for turfgrass research. A record 97 facilities from across the state donated a total of 115 foursomes. The amount raised was the third highest of any chapter in the country behind the Carolinas GCSA and Georgia GCSA.

The highest bids registered for Florida courses were:

- \$1,120 at Lake Nona Golf and Country Club in Orlando, where Brandon Richey is superintendent;
- \$800 at Old Memorial Golf Club in Tampa, where Trent Inman, CGCS is superintendent;
- \$630 at Mountain Lake Country Club in Lake Wales, where Scott Scamehorn, CGCS is superintendent.

"We made a huge stride forward on previous years," says Florida GCSA Rounds4Research committee chair Nick Kearns from The Oaks Club in Osprey. "We promoted the auction more and another big factor was getting all the local chapters to unite sending all the proceeds to the state association's research account. It was a good result given that we didn't get really started recruiting rounds until January. We hope to begin this October on next year's auction which should lead to more growth."



*Lake Nona superintendent
Brandon Richey.*

Kearns also made a point of thanking each of the 97 facilities that donated rounds regardless of how much money their donation generated. "This is all about a collective effort and every dollar raised gives us a better chance of getting answers and information that will make us all better equipped to do our jobs," he says. "So we are grateful to everyone who supported the effort and hope it inspires more to take the step next year."

Underlining the value of combined effort, Kearns says most of the 11 local chapters were represented on the state committee. A number of those people were identified through the recent membership survey having expressed that turfgrass research was important to them. Florida GCSA members on the committee were:

Nick Kearns, Chair
Anthony Baur, St. Johns Golf Club
Ralph Dain, GCSAA field representative
Darren Davis, CGCS Olde Florida Golf Club
Parker Ferren, Boca Woods Country Club
Dustin Plemons, Cleveland Heights Golf Club
David Robinson, CGCS Marriott Golf
Kevin Sunderman, Isla Del Sol Yacht and Country Club
Mark Thomas, Kelly Greens Golf and Country Club
Jason Zimmerman, CGCS Pelican's Nest Golf Club

"I think it would be very helpful to have every local chapter represented on the committee and that's something we will strive for come October," Kearns says. "What we were able to achieve this year through greater collaboration was really encouraging."

Money raised this year will be used to support the following re-

search commitments:

- Investigation of seasonal dynamics of warm-season turfgrass rooting;
- Multi-location trial to establish maintenance requirements and performance of new bermudagrass cultivars for fairway use;
- Enhancing Florida golf courses to conserve beneficial insects and natural resources;
- Multi-location trials to identify experimental lines of bermudagrass, Seashore paspalum; and zoysiagrass suitable for use on Florida golf courses.

In addition, the committee announced Bent Tree Golf Club as the winner of the Golf Industry Show package. The donation was secured by Denny Albert of Pope Golf. Each facility that donated rounds was entered in a drawing that was made during the Florida GCSA board meeting in May. The package, presented in partnership with Target Specialty Products and Turf Fuel, covers expenses to attend next year's Golf Industry Show in San Antonio, TX.

The Environmental Institute for Golf, GCSAA's philanthropic arm, took over the auction in 2012 and since then it has raised more than \$782,000 for turfgrass research. Kearns says promotional materials such as brochures and flyers generated by EIFG's Mischia Wright were helpful in spreading the word about Rounds4Research. The Florida GCSA netted more than \$15,000 from this year's auction with the balance going to the EIFG.

The Florida GCSA and the 11 local chapters greatly appreciate the support of the following facilities in the 2017 Rounds4Research auction –

Adena Golf and Country Club,
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Belleair Country Club, Belleair
Bent Creek Golf Course, Jacksonville
Bent Tree Country Club, Sarasota
Boca Woods Country Club, Boca
Raton
Calusa Lakes Golf Club, Nokomis
Candler Hills Golf Club, Ocala
Chi Chi Rodriguez Golf Club,
Clearwater
Cleveland Heights Golf Club,
Lakeland
Colony West Golf Club, Tamarac
Copperleaf Golf Club,
Bonita Springs
Countryside Country Club,
Clearwater
Cypress Lake Country Club, Fort
Myers
Deer Island Country Club, Tavares
Del Tura Golf Club, North Fort
Myers
Dubsdread Golf Course, Orlando
Dunedin Stirling Links, Dunedin

Eastpointe Country Club, Palm Beach Garden
Esplanade Golf and Country Club at Lakewood Ranch, Lakewood
Ranch
Fairways Golf Club, Orlando
Fernandina Beach Golf Club, Fernandina Beach
Gator Trace, Fort Pierce
Golf Club of the Everglades, Naples
Grande Vista Golf Club, Orlando
Grasslands Golf and Country Club, Lakeland
Griffin Gate Golf Club, Lexington, KY
Hawk's Landing Golf Club, Orlando
Heritage Palms Golf and Country Club, Fort Myers
Hobe Sound Golf Club, Hobe Sound
Indian River Preserve Golf Club, Mims
Indianwood Golf and Country Club, Indiantown
Interlachen Country Club, Winter Park
Isla Del Sol Yacht and Country Club, St. Petersburg
Jacksonville Golf and Country Club, Jacksonville
Kelly Greens Golf and Country Club, Fort Myers
Killearn Country Club, Tallahassee
Lake Nona Golf and Country Club, Orlando
Laurel Oak Country Club, Sarasota
Legacy Club at Alaqua Lakes, Longwood
Legends Golf and Country Club, Fort Myers
Lemon Bay Golf Club, Englewood



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 Misty Creek Country Club, Sarasota
 Mountain Lake Golf Course, Lake Wales
 Mystic Dunes Golf Club, Kissimmee
 Naples Heritage Golf and Country Club, Naples
 Oaks National Golf Club, Kissimmee
 Ocala Golf Club, Ocala
 Oceanside Country Club, Ormond Beach
 Old Memorial Golf Club, Tampa
 Olde orida Golf Club, Naples
 Orange Lake Golf, Kissimmee
 Palma Ceia Golf and Country Club, Tampa
 Pelican Pointe Golf and Country Club, Venice
 Pelican's Nest Golf Club, Bonita Springs
 Pine Tree Golf Club, Boynton Beach
 Ponte Vedra Inn and Club, Ponte Vedra Beach
 Riomar Country Club, Vero Beach
 Ritz Carlton Golf Club, Orlando
 River Run Golf Links, Bradenton
 Royal Oaks Golf Club, Ocala
 Sanctuary Ridge Golf Club, Clermont
 Sarasota National Golf Club, Venice
 Shadow Wood Country Club, Bonita Springs
 Southern Dunes Golf and Country Club, Haines City
 St. Johns Golf and Country Club, St. Augustine

St. Petersburg Country Club, St. Petersburg
 Stonegate Golf Course, Poinciana
 Stoneybrook Golf Club, Estero
 Sun 'N Lake Golf Club, Sebring
 Suntree Country Club, Melbourne
 Tampa Palms Golf and Country Club, Tampa
 Tara Golf and Country Club, Bradenton
 The Club at Shell Point, Fort Myers
 The Country Club of Winter Haven, Winter Haven
 The Dunes Golf and Tennis Club, Sanibel
 The Forest Country Club - The Bear Club, Fort Myers
 The Forest Country Club - The Bobcat Course, Fort Myers
 The Golf Club at South Hampton, St. Augustine
 The Loxahatchee Club, Jupiter
 The Meadows Country Club - The Highlands Course, Sarasota
 The Meadows Country Club - The Meadows Course, Sarasota
 The Monarch at Royal Highlands, Leesburg
 The Oaks Club, Osprey
 The Ritz-Carlton Members Golf Club, Bradenton
 The Seagate Country Club, Delray Beach
 The Village Golf Club, Royal Palm Beach
 The Vinoy Renaissance Resort and Golf Club, St. Petersburg
 TPC Sawgrass – Dye's Valley Course, Ponte Vedra Beach
 University Park Country Club, University Park
 Vanderbilt Country Club, Naples
 Verandah Club, Fort Myers
 West Bay Club, Estero
 World Woods Golf Course, Brooksville
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The Palm Beach GCSA is also highly appreciative of the hospitality and support of the staff and members of Eastpointe Country Club for hosting the 37th annual Future of Golf Tournament.

Florida GCSA Urges Flexible WATER-USE DURING DROUGHT

The rains finally arrived early June breaking drought that gripped much of Florida through spring. But the campaign to protect golf's interests in future drought continues. The Florida GCSA is working to establish standardized restrictions for golf courses across the state's five water management districts. The ultimate goal is to allow superintendents flexibility to irrigate on the basis of need rather than according to pre-determined schedules.

"We are absolutely committed to water conservation and especially so in times of drought," Florida GCSA executive director Jennifer Bryan says. "But the best way to conserve while protecting the turfgrass is to apply water when it will be of most benefit to the plant. Restrictions that dictate which days, which hours and in what amounts superintendents can irrigate don't achieve that aim."

Bryan says through their education and unique on-site experience superintendents are best qualified to know when and how much water they need to apply to maintain plant health. She points out that the golf delivers an annual economic impact of \$8.2 billion in Florida.

"There's a lot riding on healthy golf course turf. A superintendent can get a lot more out of a little water at the right time than they can with a lot of water at the wrong time," she says. "We are working to make that case to regulators. They have an important and difficult job trying to satisfy the needs of every stakeholder. But we earnestly believe superintendents can save more water if they are given the flexibility to irrigate according to need instead of a calendar."

As drought conditions worsened into May, the Florida GCSA wrote to each of the water management districts detailing proposed conditions for golf course water use. The letter was also delivered to Ray Scott, deputy director of agricultural water policy for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Bryan and other Florida GCSA representatives met Scott during Florida Golf Day earlier this year.

"Those face-to-face contacts are so helpful to all concerned," Bryan says. "That is why we are putting together a group of members who can invest the time and effort to establish relationships with officers their own water management district."

To date John Lammrsh from LPGA International in Boynton Beach and John Reilly from The Resort at Longboat Key have



Andy Jorgensen, CGCS



John Lammrsh

volunteered to serve, assisting the board of directors. Bryan already serves on the agriculture and green industry joint advisory committee of the South West Florida Water Management District. Much of the impetus for the Florida GCSA efforts on the issue has been driven by director Andy Jorgensen, CGCS from On Top of the World in Ocala.

Key points from the letter prepared by Jorgensen for the water management districts included:

- Superintendents are proud stewards of the environment and we take proactive measures to demonstrate our responsibility to the environment.
- Golf course superintendents can better identify the needs of the turf compared to district staff by visually monitoring and collecting on-site data using numerous methods including on-site weather stations, physical inspection of the soil moisture, soil moisture meters and computerized irrigation systems.
- Golf course superintendents can identify "low-priority" areas where conservation practices can be employed without causing undue economic or physiological harm to the playing surfaces.
- Golf course superintendents are already required to follow district-issued water usage permits that act as "water budgets" and are subject to other stringent water conservation requirements that must be followed at all times.
- Golf course superintendents utilize reclaimed water more now than ever, thereby already reducing the overall impact on Florida water resources.

Therefore, the Florida GCSA recommends the following groundwater withdrawal restrictions during drought for golf courses in the state:

Irrigation of playing surfaces on each golf course shall be reduced by 15 percent of their total groundwater withdraw permit during the initial restriction related to golf course turf, and by an additional 15 percent for any subsequently declared water restriction order up to a reduction of 45 percent of total water use.

In addition, the following restrictions shall be placed:

- Normal supplemental irrigation may only occur before 10am or after 4pm.
- Reduce or suspend to the greatest extent possible those cultural practices which stimulate the need for increased irrigation.
- Users having access to more than one source class shall maximize the use of the lesser or least restricted source class so as the source is feasible to use on golf course turf.
- The operation of irrigation systems for cleaning and maintenance purposes shall not be restricted, except to be limited to the minimum necessary to maintain efficient operation of the system. Each irrigation zone may be tested a maximum of once per week.
- Irrigation for purposes of watering-in of insecticides, fungicides, herbicides, and fertilizer where such watering-in is required by

the manufacturer or by federal, state or local law, shall be limited to the minimum necessary and should be accomplished during the hours allowed for normal irrigation.

- Following all aspects of the University of Florida's "Best Management Practices for Florida Golf Courses" publication (and provide a copy of it upon request).
- Cease the washing of all maintenance equipment except for those instances to prevent the spread of disease and pathogens from one surface to another or when utilizing a closed-loop system.

Exceptions:

- Treated wastewater irrigation shall not be restricted.
- Golf course permit holders shall be allowed to apply for a temporary variance from the existing irrigation restrictions in order to re-sod, sprig or change to more efficient grasses, and repair turf damage during the remainder of the wet season when supplemental irrigation needs are minimized due to projected rainfall.
- Isolated spot irrigation or hand watering of turf is allowed to prevent permanent injury or damage due to heat, drought or traffic stress.
- Lawns and landscape associated with golf course facilities shall follow the restrictions that pertain to those specified areas. ■

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Rain, Rain, Go Away



Eddie Mullins

Heavy rains that finally broke the drought across Florida have interfered with more than just agronomic practices. Some courses flooded during a string of rain events and even into July, Meadowbrook Golf and Country Club, a public facility and one of the oldest in Gainesville was forced to keep one nine closed because of standing water.

The loss of revenue for such a sustained period has been devastating, superintendent Eddie Mullins says. "It's brutal," he says.

"We've had to lay off three employees. I'm really not sure what the long-term outcome is going to be."

Meadowbrook only recently reopened after the latest in a string of ownership changes. Mullins says business was building up strongly course conditions improved. The course was averaging more than 100 rounds a day but that number has crashed because of the flooding to somewhere around 20.

Mullins says the course sits "at the bottom of the totem pole" when it comes to drainage from surrounding areas and in terms of city authorities' readiness to do anything to alleviate the problem. The club's new owner Chris Marcum told the local newspaper that a nearby retention pond was a major contributor to the problem. "Its water apparently leads to one pond, then it comes to us, and then stops," he said. "There's nowhere for it to go but onto us."

As a result, Mullins says, a .75-acre pond on the back nine was still covering about four acres weeks after the worst of the rains. Almost daily rainfall since has managed to top up anything dissipated by drainage and evaporation. ■



Rain caused flooding at Meadowbrook Golf and Country Club in Gainesville and then poor drainage outside the course kept the water in place for weeks.

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The Grand Finale: Tom Alex

STEPS DOWN AFTER 34 YEARS

Generally people who retire after a highly successful career can look back on enough ports of call to push their resume into several pages. Tom Alex is an exception. He's been highly successful, yes, but you could almost fit his resume on the back of a postage stamp. Alex was director of golf course maintenance at Grand Cypress Resort in Orlando from 1983 until he retired in May. That's one month shy of 34 years at the one facility.

Of course he had no idea that would be the case when he arrived after two years as an assistant superintendent during construction and grow-in of TPC Sawgrass. "No chance," he laughs. "Not when you consider that the average shelf life of superintendents, golf pros and general managers is, I think, about five years."

But both Alex and Grand Cypress would come to learn that he was ideally suited to a resort facility with high standards. As a self-confessed "classical type-A" personality, he wanted results and had little patience for anything that delayed progress. "Just tell me what you want done, then get out of the way and we'll get it done," he says.

Not having to wade and weave his way through the deliberations of green committees or deal with members who knew better, was the perfect circumstance. "You know the comedian Ron White?" Alex asks. "He's got the greatest line that fits me to the nth degree, 'I have the right to remain silent, but not the ability.' Friends of mine say I would have been okay in a country club environment. But I don't know."

Alex grew up in northwest Connecticut and had his first taste of Florida when he interned at Sawgrass while Pete Dye was still scratching thoughts in the dirt in 1980. After graduating from the UMass Stockbridge School of Agriculture the following year, he returned to Sawgrass. When the job at Grand Cypress came up there was not a single golf hole in place let alone the 45 Alex would maintain for decades to come.

Initial clearing of the Jack Nicklaus design had just begun. Alex, now a golf course superintendent, was just 22. "That's pretty young," he reflects, given the stakes and the stature of whose design he was looking after. Asked if he was confident or naïve in taking on a role like that at such a young age, Alex concedes, "It was definitely a little bit of both."

"But when Nicklaus was building golf courses back in the day he had a agronomist, Ed Etchells, who would kind of get you through everything you needed to get through," Alex says. "So it wasn't like I was on my own. Ed would come by every two or three weeks so I had plenty of help along the way."

The first 18 holes at Grand Cypress opened successfully in 1984, the east nine and a three-hole golf academy and driving range



Tom Alex

followed in 1986. Then the last 18 holes opened in 1988. Alex remembers that period fondly. "If you've done construction and grow-in it's a gas," he says. "It's a lot of work but it's fun. It's about as good as it gets."

That is not to suggest that it was all downhill from there once the courses were in place. In some ways, Alex was in just any superintendent's dream job. "I had full autonomy, which was wonderful," he says. "But the real beauty of my job was that all the owners we had (four over the years) were all very focused on the resort being a golf resort. With that, I got the tools and the equipment and the staff to maintain those golf courses. The focus was always on golf course maintenance. It was never an afterthought. That makes you feel pretty good."

Alex also proved to be what so many of the best superintendents are and that is an excellent mentor and nurturer of talent. He lost count long ago of the number of people who came through Grand Cypress on their way to successful careers of their own. "There has been a whole bunch. The family tree is a pretty good size," he says. "But if you're in the same job for 34 years and you're interested in developing people, you're going to have a lot of them come and go. To me it was important that when they left they had the tools to be successful."

He'd had some good teachers of his own beginning with an old-schooler called Bob Witkowski when Alex was a kid getting his toes wet at Washington Golf Club in his hometown of Washington Depot. At Sawgrass he came into contact with the late Allan Mac-Currach, the PGA Tour's first agronomist, and another, Dennis Leger. Etchells was an enormous help early on at Grand Cypress.

"Every one of those guys was a great mentor for me," Alex says. "They took a personal interest in what I was doing. So then it came naturally to me when it was my turn to develop superintendents. When golf was booming we'd move one or two guys a year. It's fun to look back on. A lot of the guys have become good friends which is wonderful because working for me was not the easiest thing in the world. Yet today, we're pretty close. Not all of them, but a lot."

Alex says he relied a lot on his "gut" when it came to hiring. He says "odd numbers" worked well too in the sense that he was always careful to have three assistant superintendents in addition to his two superintendents.

"We had a little pecking order and typically the senior superintendent would move on and everyone would get a bump. But not always," he says. "We told them straight, may the best man get the job and sometimes a guy with less time would leapfrog over another guy. Competition is a good thing and always will be. But it wasn't ruthless or crazy."



Tom Alex with the spoils of another of his skill sets.

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Deciding who got the thumbs up was made easier by a rule of thumb Alex lived by. "I made sure I was doing the right thing for the resort at all times, at all costs, whatever it took," he says. "That's one way to keep yourself employed for a long time. Just make sure you're doing the right thing all the time for the company you're working for and, most of the time, the rest will fall into place."

Few superintendents are able to retire at 56 as Alex has done. Sometimes they become too expensive – at least in the eyes of their employers – and are let go despite good performance. Sometimes they just don't make enough by then. Alex says he was fortunate to have "done some things on the side" that his employers were fully aware of.

He is a part-owner of Master-Turf Farm and as he was with lake management company, Lake Masters. That business sold in January which Alex says "helped a lot" allowing him to say "sayonara on Cinco de Mayo." "I would say I've retired from Grand Cypress but hopefully not from the golf industry," he says. He has launched Alex Golf Services and is already signed, at the owners' request, to do four visits annually to the facility that was home. For now though he is maintaining a respectful distance, although he remains in touch with many of his workmates, some who have been at Grand Cypress almost as long.

"My dad used to be a baseball coach and he always preached being strong up the middle," he says. "Pitching, catching, short stop, second base, center field. And if you look at it in a golf course maintenance way – superintendent, assistant, spray tech, irrigation tech and head mechanic, you're strong up the middle and you're good. We were pretty blessed to have good people in all those roles for a long time." Alex stresses that another blessing – for 27 years – was his "tremendous" office administrator Lisa McDowell.

By far the biggest "blessing" in Alex's professional life occupies a similar place in his personal life. "Three-quarters of my success has been my wife Suzanne," he says. "We were married right before the grass went down on the newest course at Grand Cypress

in 1987. She's been so supportive it's unbelievable. There was never any issue when the resort called to say you've got an irrigation blow out, or you've got to be there for a tournament, or you've got to go in on a Sunday. That makes life really easy."

The Alexes have a daughter Peggy, 27, who is a teacher and a son, Kevin, 25, who refurbishes foreclosed homes for banks. The fact they have houses of their own, that Alex has one in Orlando and another in Hernando County, that he has a boat he is restoring, not to mention the consulting business, all add up to him staying busy despite giving up his old day job. He even still plans helping out with administration of the Central Florida GCSA's Crowfoot Open as he has for years. All told, he hasn't had anywhere the time he thought he would to play more golf.

Still, he says, "It's been a blast. We'll see where the consulting service leads, if anywhere. But I'd just gotten to a point where I knew it was time to go. I'd reached that point. One of the things we prided ourselves on was trying to provide country club conditions at a resort every day. I never wanted to get complacent because our drive had always been pretty good. Anyone who knows anything about Grand Cypress knows we got after it...hard...all the time. I think that's one of the reasons we lasted in the same place as long as we did." ■



Suzanne and Tom Alex when he won the Central Florida GCSA's Larry Kamphaus Award for professionalism and service to the chapter.



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Shannon Wheeler makes a point to Mike Stevens doing the rounds at Fernandina Beach Golf Club.

BEING LIKE MIKE: COOL, CALM AND HIGHLY EFFECTIVE

By Trent Bouts

There's a video from Billy Casper Golf's annual awards gala that shows Peter Hill presenting Michael Stevens with the 2016 Superintendents Chairman's Award. Hill, the company's CEO and one of Golf Inc. magazine's 10 most powerful people in the game, remarks how Stevens' "calm demeanor" caught his attention early. Hill came to learn that air reflected a quiet confidence that made Stevens ideally suited as both a mentor and motivator in his role as the company's regional director of agronomy for the central and south-eastern U.S.

In a world dominated by the "me" generation - manically self-interested and overflowing with opinions - Stevens' willingness to listen and regulate his input is almost an anachronism. He has no interest in being the loudest person in the room, only the most effective contributor he can be.

It's an approach Hill says makes Stevens "a wonderful leader and organizer" and "a very valued member" of the Billy Casper agronomic team, which manages more than 140 courses across nearly 30 states. At times, Stevens has had responsibility for the success and career development of the agronomic staff at close to 50 of those facilities. And he is not yet 40. If anyone had cause for a little excess confidence it might be someone so young and already so near the top of their game.

But Stevens, the Florida GCSA's current secretary-treasurer and based out of St. Johns Golf and Country Club in St. Augustine, possesses a humility characteristic of another time. "I remember during my first year as a superintendent, my dad came and we were playing golf," he says. "He goes, 'I can't believe you're in charge of all of this. And I said, 'Yeah, neither can I!' There are



Mike Stevens has his arms around a territory ranging from Florida, north to Tennessee and west to Texas for Billy Casper Golf.

times when I feel like somebody is looking out for me, there is no doubt. I try to be a good person but Lord knows none of us are perfect and sometimes I do wonder why I'm so blessed to have the opportunities I have."

That wondering only goes so far. Stevens says his mother, Theresa, and father, Rick, always looked out for him despite their divorce when he was barely old enough to walk. "Both were part of my everyday life, from extending an open arm to an open ear," he says. "Any support I needed, morally, ethically. I had a great upbringing regardless of the circumstances. I was raised by two supportive households, not just one."

Stevens did live under his mother's roof though, a roof she provided with her own business cleaning houses for other people. "She did it to create the opportunities to get us to baseball practice or whatever it was," he says. "Growing up I never felt like I wasn't able to do anything."



Andy Maguire, CGCS and Mike Stevens trade thoughts at St. Johns Golf and Country Club.

If he gleaned a moral compass and a work ethic from his parents' example, he picked up another helpful trait from his paternal grandfather. An optometrist in Gainesville, the grandfather was a passionate golfer. "The most avid golfer I've ever known," Stevens says. "He was a horrible golfer though. Horrendous from what my dad tells me. But he didn't care. He loved golf."

So much so that when doctors told the grandfather they needed to amputate an arm to prevent skin cancer taking his life, he said no thanks. Rather than lose an arm and the ability to play he died at 67. "I've got that stubbornness, I know that," Stevens says. "It has helped me stand my ground in certain situations where, looking back, maybe I didn't really know what was right or what was wrong but for some reason I felt I should stand up."

Fast-forward to today and Stevens believes that resolve has served him well the entire way. "I think the position I hold now is much-attributed to that ability to not be afraid to say no or to ask the difficult questions," he says. "I know in our company that is appreciated. There is a culture of candor. We want you to be different, not for the sake of being a trendsetter but in order to be willing to get out there and find a different and better way."

That philosophy echoes one espoused by Stevens' father when the son arrived at the end of high school but didn't know where to go next. "I told my father I wasn't ready to go to college. I didn't know what I wanted to do in life yet and that I didn't want to waste his money," Stevens says. "Which he thought was great. He encouraged me to explore different parts of life and really find out what I

wanted to do."

Stevens took inventory. As a kid he pushed a mower around the neighborhood cutting grass and performing "whatever odd chores to earn some cash." He knew he was "an outdoors guy" but his baseball and athletics days weren't going to extend beyond high school. What he did have was a recently re-energized interest in golf and his father was a member at Gainesville Golf and Country Club. "Maybe I'll get a job there," Stevens thought to himself. "I already know how to cut grass!"

The superintendent at the time, Buddy Keene, sent him to fly-mow bunkers. "First day on the job, aside from getting covered in fire ants, I fell in love with the industry," Stevens laughs. "I knew instantly that's what I wanted to do."

Keene, who Stevens remembers as a "very proud superintendent" who taught him a lot about dedication, had earlier worked for the late, great Jeff Hayden, and was a graduate of the Golf Course Operations program at Lake City Community College. He pointed Stevens in that same direction. Several members at Gainesville were also on the Jacksonville Area Golf Association scholarship committee. Stevens was introduced to them and soon enough interviewed for a scholarship which he won and which paid for his study at Lake City.

During college Stevens worked a couple of internships, one at Caledonia Golf and Fish Club in Myrtle Beach, SC where his brother lived, and had a job waiting for him there as second assis-

tant as graduation date neared. In the meantime, he was building on-the-job experience under Kim Shine, CGCS at Windsor Parke Golf Club in Jacksonville. Shine was packing for a trip to GCSAA's annual conference when she offered to carry Stevens' resume along: "I told her I already had a job. She said, 'Yeah, but it never hurts.'"

Shine, who Stevens says was "always looking to help and grow those around her," came back with five job offers, all appealing but one especially so. So he called Jackson Clemmons, the superintendent at Caledonia, with apologies - which were graciously accepted Stevens adds - and instead moved near to St. Augustine and the fledgling St. Johns Golf and Country Club. His family would still be nearby in Gainesville and his fiancée's family had earlier moved to nearby Jacksonville. "We wanted a family of our own and we wanted to be around family," he says. "To also have the chance to build and grow-in a golf course...I just couldn't turn it down."

There he found his "number one superintendent mentor" in Lon Chatfield. "He's the guy from a superintendent standpoint," Stevens says. "He showed me all the tools that helped me become a leader, even more than a manager, because he firmly believed it was all about the people first. Take care of them and everything will fall into place; supporting them in all aspects of life not just professionally, but personally as well; taking honest care in their growth as human beings not just as employees."

Stevens says that ethos marries well with his current role for Billy Casper Golf, where through current coach and mentor, Bryan Bielecki, vice-president of agronomy, the emphasis is as much on growing people as it is on growing grass. "Satisfaction now is more when I see a guy who has walked in my door as a crew member at the age of 18 who's now ready to take on his first superintendent position seven or eight years later," he says. "That gives me so much more satisfaction than just a hard day's work because I know I've had an impact, not just on his life, but his family's life, his kids' life."

For all the people Stevens' credits with leading him to where he is in his profession and in life, he says none has played a greater role than his wife, Amanda, who he describes as his "best friend in life." They met in second grade, had a brief courtship in fourth grade, and went for their first official date at 16, when she invited him to play golf at West End Golf Club, a floodlit 18-hole executive course in Gainesville. "I remember her outfit, purple golf shirt with white pants...and she beat me," Stevens laughs.

It was that night and that relationship that fueled the golfing bug in Stevens that had otherwise lain largely dormant since whacking pine cones in the yard with one of his grandfather's clubs as a three-

year-old. "Amanda has always been so supportive," Stevens says. "We've always been around each other so she knows who I am, she knows the things I hold important and she knows my work ethic."

Clearly she does. Consider that Stevens graduated from Lake City on May 6, 2000, they married on the 7th and then, on the 8th, instead of honeymooning, moved to Ponte Vedra Beach for the St. Johns job. A year later they had their son Benjamin, now 16, on opening day of the new golf course. "I finished setting up the course and then went to the delivery room," Stevens says. "Didn't miss a thing." A few years later came daughter Madison, now 11. Wife and kids are all "absolutely awesome," Stevens says.

"No matter how important something is, nothing is more impor-



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Florida GCSA president Ricky Reeves and secretary-treasurer Mike Stevens wrap up after a board meeting this spring.

tant than my family,” he adds. “There’s a clear separation between that and the next level of importance. The second most important thing is the support of all the superintendents I am humbly fortunate to work with now. The support they give me by allowing me to help them is incredible because the reality is almost every superintendent I work with, if not now, then certainly will be, a way better superintendent than I ever was.”

That sentiment underlines the fact that these days Stevens spends much of his working time on the phone, in a meeting, behind the

wheel of a car or on a plane. He is “technically” still at St. Johns where he became superintendent when Chatfield left in 2007. In 2010 he took on his regional duties and the St. Johns’ role is now occupied by Andy Maguire, CGCS. So while he remains based right where he began his focus is now far broader. The regional role has “forced” him to see more than grass.

“It’s business with agronomics and I’m not sure there’s more of one than the other,” he says. “But it is more than developing a good root structure to get through drought. It’s more about the fundamentals of getting through that drought and producing a product that supports the 15 year plan of an asset, all at the same time while you’re developing the game of golf for youth, women, and all demographics.”

Still, “There are days when I miss my golf course,” he says. “I miss unlocking the gate, starting a pot of coffee, watching the guys roll in, getting the day started, working through the day, then watching the irrigation come on at night, riding the golf course while the sun’s going down. Absolutely there are days when I miss that.

“But more than missing those days are the days when I get guys calling with just simple stuff. It could be that someone has just passed a turf certificate program, wants to talk aerification displacement philosophies, or someone just had their first son, or anything and everything that could come in between that. I’ve been very fortunate to develop relationships and friendships that will no doubt last a lifetime. I owe a lot to this industry and do my best to repay it. It’s been a blast.” ■



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2017 Keeper of the Green Award:
Ryan Hill, left, with Keeper of the Green winner
Billy Griffith, James Wathen and Lon Chatfield.

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Career Balance is More THAN WORK AND FAMILY

by Kyle Sweet, CGCS

The average American will work 45 years of their life and have up to 15 different jobs. I'm betting that when you entered the golf course management profession you estimated several job changes to climb the ladder, paying your dues. Of course, at the beginning of your career this is inevitable.



Kyle Sweet, CGCS

My dad always said that hard work pays off and if you've given of yourself, worked hard and climbed that ladder your next – and ongoing – task is to carefully balance. That doesn't just mean the work and life balance. It also means constantly balancing your skills with the changing needs of your role.

No one survives in any profession – let alone golf course maintenance – with the same skill set they started out with 45 years earlier. We've all witnessed examples of why we need to constantly evolve as superintendents. Those who fall from the top of the ladder don't just drop to the next rung. Sometimes they go all the way to the ground.

If you believe this then, in today's competitive, non-growth job market, it's certainly best to hang on – and the higher up the ladder you go that balance becomes more and more important.

The term "job security" makes a superintendent chuckle. Maybe it's because so many factors – often out of our hands – affect our jobs every day. Yet there are so many things we can do to impact our job security nearly every day. I don't have all of the answers and I

doubt anyone does, but I would like to share with you some of the key factors that I believe can keep you happily in that job for many years to come. Here are a few:

Employee Recruitment and Advancement

Recruitment of your assistant superintendents and other key management positions can take place in many ways. For years, college programs provided interns and a path to reach out to professors to find those top guys for those management positions. That avenue is still there and should always be researched. But looking into your existing crew for that person who wants to expand and succeed can be great for you and your club. Beyond that, the irrigation manager that moved up the ladder may just want to return when that assistant's position opens up in the future.

Employee Retention

Employee retention is a big deal and, yes, it's expensive. No mystery here that an operator mowing fairways for 15 years is paid more than the new guy. But I have to say, for your sake, that the cost is worth it. The operator knows more about that mower than you probably do and can be a huge help with equipment training, special mowing routines, identifying turf issues and many other things. I hope you all have the camaraderie that we have here at our facility with many long term employees. The family feel of your crew can be very rewarding and beneficial to your tenure.

Continuing Education

Continuing education is so important. Not everyone in this business had the opportunity of a college education but if you did it was surely a boost to your early career prospects. If you didn't, you knew that work was ahead to keep up to speed in the industry and compete. Degree or not, we're all in the same boat very quickly and looking for those pesticide license CEU's or class credits toward becoming a CGCS.

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Those are great but what about education beyond the norm? How about a management class or two that your general manager has taken? How about a computer class to make you better in the office? What about a class on wildlife or photography? That stuff counts too and if you want to be an interesting, well-rounded, long-term employee in your role, you will certainly use that education just as well. Besides, breaking out of the box is what you might need to keep you going in that long term role you're in.

Communication

Communication is key. The days of hiding in the shop when the course isn't in such good shape are over if you're the guy that wants to stick around. It's easy to ride the course and greet the golfers when the course is just right. But it's even more important to be visible when you might need to explain a thing or two.

Sure, blast an email out to provide notification in some situations but let's remember who we are working for. Face time is valuable and hearing directly from you goes a long way. Sometimes face time is not an option, understandably, but with all of the gadgets and technology out there today, a lack of communication should never occur. Make communication a priority and maybe attempt to over-communicate on something...good luck, I don't think there is such a thing.

I've worked for several general managers at our club. One thing that's certain is your GM wants you to communicate. There's probably nothing worse than a GM getting blindsided by something that you know of but didn't communicate. I would expect that if your GM knows that you take communication to him or her seriously, they will return the respect.

Touch Skills

Touch skills is really a tough one to truly define. "Touch" enters a realm that is natural if you are doing everything else right. A "touch" is knowing that Mr. Smith plays yellow golf balls and upon seeing him on the course, you pull out a couple that you've set aside and with a smile tell him he must have lost a few last week. He'll smile and so will his golfing buddies.

It's writing a note of congratulations to the club champion and dropping it in the mail. It's a simple wave and a smile to passers-by as they drive into the club and maybe even offering to take a guest or grandchild out on the course to see the wildflowers and the wildlife that call your course home. Yes, it takes time but it is time well spent and will provide you the best return on that time of anything you can do on the job. Find that way to reach out and do it.

If you want to dig in and keep that job for a while there are so many things you can do to make it satisfying. It takes work and it takes a good recipe for long-term success. Enjoy the ride...it's in your hands. ■

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

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A Past, Present and Future LOOK AT TURFGRASS RESEARCH

by Travis Shaddox, Ph.D.

Past

The University of Florida's turfgrass program began in 1922 with the establishment of lawn turfgrasses. The introduction of turfgrass research in south Florida began with Dr. Roy Bair in Belle Glade around the end of World War II. To meet the growing needs of the turfgrass industry in south Florida, in 1961 UF opened the first turfgrass specialist position at the Plantation Laboratory in Ft. Lauderdale served by Dr. Ralph Smalley.

Dr. Evert Burt replaced Dr. Smalley in 1962 and, in 1969, the Plantation Laboratory moved from Ft. Lauderdale to its current location in Davie, which is located on a World War II U.S. Air Force pilot training facility. Dr. Burt conducted turf research until 1979 when Dr. Bruce Augustin took over the turf program, which he led until 1986.

Dr. John Cisar then began a 30-year tenure conducting research for the turfgrass industry in Ft. Lauderdale. Upon, Dr. Cisar's retirement, I accepted the responsibility of continuing the south Florida turfgrass program in November, 2015.

Present

When I accepted the leadership of the Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center turf program, the facility had not been operating normally in the two years since Dr. Cisar's retirement. This delay in operations resulted in the vast majority of turfgrass becoming unacceptable and, in most cases, unrecoverable.

In the spring of 2016, the 8,000 sq. ft. ultradwarf putting green was fumigated and replanted with TifEagle. This green is now more representative of a typical TifEagle green (speeds around 9-10). Following renovation of the ultradwarf green, two acres of contaminated Tifway, Celebration and paspalum were fumigated. These areas were replanted with 10,000 sq. ft. of certified 419, TifTuf and Latitude 36 and 20,000 sq. ft. of Celebration.

The remaining acreage has been planted with the Florida GCSA bermudagrass variety trial, which includes the previously mentioned bermudas along with TifGrand and Bimini (Fig. 1). The additions of these bermagrass cultivars will allow research to be conducted on current and new bermudagrasses in south Florida,

Figure 1: The Florida GCSA bermudagrass variety trial includes Tifway, TifTuf, Latitude 36, Celebration, TifGrand and Bimini.



which in turn provides you with greater information before purchasing and managing one of these cultivars.

The renovation of the ultradwarf green and the planting of new bermudagrasses would not have been possible using the existing irrigation system. Much of the existing infrastructure was installed when the research center moved to Davie in 1969. This includes much of the PVC and, in some cases, metal pipe and irrigation heads.

Thanks to the generosity of Darren Davis, CGCS from Olde Florida Golf Club, the FLREC was able to install new electric irrigation heads on every turf plot. This allows the center to maintain green, fairway and tee areas similarly to current golf course conditions and it will reduce the number of irrigation leaks and broken heads that seem to plague the facility.

Currently, the FLREC turf program is completing the second phase of renovations. The remaining 13,000 sq. ft. putting green, along with the approach has been stripped (Fig. 2) and will be fumigated and replanted with TifEagle and 419. Upon completion, the facility will have 21,000 sq. ft. of new TifEagle greens and more than two acres of fairway bermudagrass available for research.

Additionally, all irrigation clocks are being replaced with more modern ET-based controllers with cellular communication. These controllers have been graciously donated by the manufacturer and the controllers allow the facility to exemplify current golf BMPs regarding irrigation controllers.

With the support of the Florida GCSA, the UF turf program has invested in new scientific instruments. In January, the Florida GCSA (along with support from the Sports Turf Managers Association and Environmental Research and Education Foundation) purchased a nitrogen analyzer, which is housed at the FLREC (Fig 3). This instrument analyzes total nitrogen in plants, soil, or water and greatly increases the turf program's ability to process samples, complete research projects, and, ultimately develop up-to-date turfgrass nutrient recommendations. Prior to this instrument's arrival, samples had to be shipped to an off-site laboratory, which greatly increased costs and delayed data analysis.

In addition to the nitrogen analyzer, the south Florida turfgrass program spearheaded efforts for the FLREC to purchase an inductively coupled plasma spectrophotometer (ICP). Essentially, the ICP allows the turf program to analyze all other elements except nitrogen. Therefore, at this point, the UF turf program now has the direct ability to analyze all elements of nutritional importance in turfgrass management.

Why is this important? Throughout the last several months, the UF turf program has been developing evidence-based nutrient reference ranges for turfgrasses. These nutrient ranges will allow the UF turf team to accurately interpret turfgrass nutrient content and provide meaningful fertilizer recommendations based upon tissue analysis, an ability no other tissue testing laboratory has.

Upon completion, the UF turf program will receive turfgrass tissue from anywhere in Florida and rapidly provide recommendations



Figure 2: A 13,000 sq. ft. putting green, along with the approach, has been stripped and will be fumigated and replanted with TifEagle and 419.

based upon their nutrient content, a process very similar to the UF rapid turf disease diagnostic lab and the UF nematode assay laboratories in Gainesville.

Future

The future looks very promising, but we do have a long way to go. The UF turf team continues to strengthen by taking a statewide approach to research. Recommendations developed from research in north Florida may not be relevant to south Florida and vice versa. Therefore, it is crucial that UF turf research encompasses the vast diversity of Florida's ecosystem, and we are doing just that.

We are continuing to upgrade the facility and equipment. All fairway-height turfgrasses are being maintained by an antiquated utility mower. While the mower is still operational, when it breaks, turf maintenance and research is greatly delayed because the facility does not employ a mechanic nor do we have any unique tools for servicing equipment such as reel grinders, lifts, etc. Therefore, this utility mower is next on the list for replacement.

Additionally, the turf program does not have many of the basic pieces of equipment used to maintain high quality turf such as a vacuum, verticutter, blower, or an acceptable topdresser or aerifier. However, the need to have high-quality turf research conducted in south Florida has been recognized by the Florida GCSA board and the board has acted, resulting in some of this equipment now arriving at the station. In addition, industry support continues to grow with products and services being donated by equipment, fertilizer, chemical manufacturers and sod growers.

Effluent water use will continue to grow and so will the need to determine BMPs for turfgrasses maintained with effluent water. This is why during each irrigation renovation or new installation, a purple pipe system is being installed directly below the existing irrigation. In this manner, when funding for effluent water research becomes available, the expense to plumb in the effluent water will only include plumbing from the source to the research plots. The total area with purple pipe installed is currently 0.5 acres.

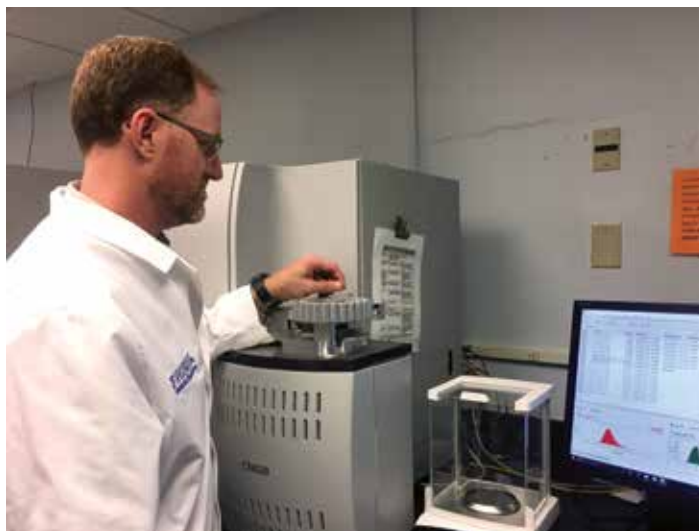


Figure 3: Dr. Travis Shaddox makes use of the new nitrogen analyzer that the Florida GCSA helped purchase.

As you can see, the UF turf program in south Florida is in need of a major facelift, but we have made great progress, and with your continued collaboration, we look forward to building Florida a world-class turfgrass research facility, which will service your research needs for years to come. ■

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App Makes Sense of Fertilizer Ordinances

Golf course superintendents will soon have fingertip access to detailed information on fertilizer ordinances in their area thanks to a new mobile web app created at the University of Florida IFAS Extension. The mobile web app, expected to be available this summer, will allow superintendents and others in landscape management to know which rules affect them and what those rules will and won't allow.

The app is the brainchild of Dr. Bryan Unruh to help people make sense of the broad and varied nature of ordinances that exist from county to county. In the wake of 2016's algal blooms along some of the state's finest coastlines, there was increased emphasis on creating policy to reduce future incidents. During debates among legislators everything from agriculture, to septic tanks to landscape fertilizer, were cited as factors contributing to poor water quality.

While IFAS research suggests landscape fertilizer does not play as significant a role as it is often assigned, the reality is that much of the state has crafted ordinances on when it should or should not be applied.

"There's a lot of confusion, especially in the larger urban areas like Orlando and Tampa where you have multiple counties," Unruh says. "So the idea was conceived that if you have a GPS-enabled smart phone you can hit a button and it will tell you exactly what landscape fertilizer ordinance is in place at that particular site."

Unruh says app users will be able to contribute to the app and keep it constantly updated by flagging amendments or even new ordinances they encounter. "An industry person may hear about something happening in their municipality or their county," he says. "They can actually upload that information into the tool that then comes back to us and then we can vet it for accuracy. They won't be able to change the content as it appears on the app, but they can provide us their ears on the ground so we make the necessary updates."

Users will pay a fee, expected to be \$9.99 annually, for access to the web app. Unruh says the price was kept down thanks to partial funding from the Florida Friendly Landscaping, Center for Landscape Conservation and Ecology, the Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association, the Environmental Research and Education Foundation and internal program funds.

Find the app at <http://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/apps>.



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Science *Schmience*: The Assault ON FACTS THAT THREATENS GOLF



Mac Carraway



Precede: Golf and other green industries are increasingly in the spotlight as lawmakers, regulators and the public grapple with issues ranging from drought to algal blooms to wildlife deaths. Finding meaningful and lasting solutions requires decisions based on science not emotion. But as consulting executive director of the Environmental Research and Education Foundation, Mac Carraway - the man closest to the heart of it all on behalf of the green industries - reports here, that is far from the standard being applied.

The Environmental Research and Education Foundation (EREF) has been focused on a mission of serving Florida's green industry. This includes golf, turf production, turf installation, sports turf, professional lawn-care providers and their allied supply chain. By funding environmental research and sharing sound scientific findings on the environmental and human-health benefits of properly maintained greenspaces and urban landscapes, EREF strives to protect Florida's environment and natural resources.

Since its inception, EREF has raised over \$250,000 which has been

and still is dedicated to pursuing rational policy outcomes for the green industry in Florida and its home communities, mostly related to these key issues:

- Water use and conservation,
- Water quality and nutrient management,
- Landscape design standards and proscriptive limits on plant material including turfgrass and landscape plants,
- Agronomic and crop protection science.

It is inarguable that in those bullets are some of the most complex and challenging issues facing Florida today and for many years to come. The very fate of the green industry depends on how the industry addresses and responds to these challenges.

Is that an overstatement? Consider what has happened over the last several years – these are just a few of the more notable examples:

- Several major counties have enacted punitive and restrictive fertilizer blackout periods, disregarding industry BMP programs, education initiatives and peer-reviewed science.
- Repeated efforts to garner legislative action to pre-empt and unify fertilizer policy in Florida have all failed – primarily due to the notion of home rule (where cities and counties are unwilling to cede any decisions to the state legislature).
- Catastrophic wildlife deaths – manatees, pelicans, dolphins – have been blamed on urban fertilizer use without any evidence.
- Cities and counties have enacted or considered “progressive” landscape ordinances, which proscribe or prohibit specific landscape materials and practices – primarily with the intent of limiting turfgrass and non-native plant and tree materials.
- Regional water supply planning across Florida has sent local governments and regulators scurrying to adopt restrictive irrigation and landscape models and “incentives” which severely

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Fear and emotion are sometimes being used to sway decisions affecting turfgrass management at the expense of science.

erode green industry market share without attempting to employ alternative measures and education.

- Water managers continue to rely on inefficient enforcement models (e.g. day-of-the-week watering) rather than embracing water budgets, irrigation design standards and efficient irrigation technology.
- Statewide water quality efforts continue to avoid addressing root-cause issues like septic contributions, lax wastewater and reclaimed water management, and atmospheric deposition. This despite the fact they are substantially more detrimental to Florida's water quality than the illusory and mythical "low hanging fruit" of urban fertilizer use.
- Local governments continue to explore restrictions on EPA-approved landscape-management products using junk-science to correlate them with human-health impacts, often exploiting emotion and fear to accomplish such an agenda.

As one EREF board member recently stated, "Efforts to limit safe and science-based practices are becoming insidious in local-government policy making."

Prolific headlines about the massive algal blooms in southeast Florida offer up a stark comparison between the perceptions and the realities of nutrient management in Florida. Take the following two scenarios which clearly illustrate the dysfunction of the current situation – Tampa Bay and the Indian River Lagoon.

Tampa Bay

Policy makers in the Tampa Bay area pioneered blaming urban landscapes for seagrass bed impacts and other bay illnesses. However, by their own reporting, the Tampa Bay Estuary Program's (TBEP) glowing assessment of seagrass bed recoveries in the Bay reflect no discernable beneficial impact from those same restrictive ordinances.

Even though this was well known to the TBEP and its allies, they still promoted a self-serving taxpayer-funded study by Applied Ecology to "prove" the effectiveness of the growing-season blackouts. The study was widely hailed in the Brevard County area as the once-and-for-all justification for their copycat blackout ordinances.

However, once the Applied Ecology study was released, it was quickly shelved due to its lack of substantive findings, and its clear-cut recognition that it would take a decade of highly-structured before-and-after studies to reach any meaningful conclusions on the efficacy of fertilizer blackouts.

Indian River Lagoon

Suffering from seagrass bed depletion and adverse lagoon impacts, local policy makers were frightened by unscrupulous environmental activists into believing that passing Tampa Bay-styled ordinances was the silver bullet to fix the lagoon. It is now crystal clear that the ordinances did nothing to even slightly mitigate the




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impacts now being felt again along the lagoon. It was a false promise and a bill of goods, plain and simple.

What is the point of all of this?

EREF was right!

EREF provided consistent early testimony that the Tampa Bay “miracle” was no miracle at all, but rather the result of hard-nosed planning, massive Clean Water Act projects, industry BMPs and education.

EREF supported and promoted the extensive FDEP/UF-IFAS study on nutrient leaching which demonstrated the fatal flaws in growing-season blackout policy.

From the organization’s outset, EREF communications and presentations have noted that agronomic and crop protection chemicals would be a target of activist policy makers. In 2016, the City of Miami Beach began evaluating a ban of glyphosate use from all public areas. While not passed, the chilling effect of such tactics by environmental activists, which exploit the public’s legitimate worries about human-health impacts, are unfortunate – in other words, science *schmience*.

EREF has advocated from its inception that collaboration and education are the keys to real and sustained change in behaviors related

to irrigation and nutrient management. Further, EREF understands the exemptions for certain industry segments and trained professionals, which are offered in some ordinances, are very fragile, and it has vigorously defended these exemptions – most notably in the important vote upholding them in Orange County.

So, what’s next?

The stakes could not be higher. Somebody must stand up to the forces that use populist notions and junk science to make environmental policy. Sadly, protesting urban fertilizer or crop protection chemicals in the name of protecting people and the environment from a contrived harm, will get you some press coverage and can even garner the status of a “movement.”

Efforts by EREF and its allied trade organizations to offer scientific and rational alternatives have slowed this phenomenon down and even in some cases turned it back. But the nature of it is relentless, and the need to stave it off needs to be equally so.

“What’s next” is that the industry, through EREF and its trade partners, need to step up their efforts even further to match the relentlessness of the groups whose goal is nothing less than seeing managed urban landscapes and golf courses disappear from the face of Florida.

EREF exists to anchor green industry efforts to mobilize around common issues and to develop a consistent science-based response, and to leverage the incredible talent and resources of its stakeholders to achieve much-needed push back. The leaders of the major green industry trades and their key suppliers have recognized the ever-increasing severity of these attacks on their very way of life and are collaborating on a game plan to resist these existential threats.

The work done by EREF to date must not be allowed to diminish. Instead, it needs to accelerate to achieve parity with the activist organizations whose goal is to undermine the green industry and the hard-working people, the jobs and the companies it represents. The hope of EREF’s board of directors is that the green industry, through the generosity of its partner trade organizations and of individual supporters and partners, will continue this critical mission for years to come. ■

-Mac Carraway is consulting executive director of the Environmental Research and Education Foundation. Learn more about EREF at www.EREFFlorida.com.

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IN THE NEWS

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

T. J. Shine

Estero Country Club

Naples Daily News, May 9



T. J. Shine

T.J. Shine has been named the new golf course superintendent at Estero Country Club at The Vines. Shine, a Michigan State graduate, worked as a groundskeeper in minor league baseball for a year before moving to Florida. He was an assistant superintendent in Naples for six years, then went to North Fort Myers as a superintendent for seven years. He is currently on the board of the Everglades chapter of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

Sheldon Foote

Chattahoochee Golf Club

Gainesville Times, May 17

After many years operating out of the rough, business at the city-owned Chattahoochee Golf Club is picking up and back on the fairway. Golfers teed off for 27,125 rounds in 2016 at the lush 18-hole course, and play this year at the Robert Trent Jones Sr.-designed layout is ahead of last year's pace by 425 rounds.

Shortly after taking over as golf pro in the spring of 2009, Rodger Hogan and other city managers got word that they had to make cuts in their budgets. "We eliminated four positions, including the assistant pro," Hogan said. Since then, Hogan and golf course superintendent Sheldon Foote were called on to shoulder more duties and responsibilities.

The course opened in 1960 and underwent a multimillion dollar renovation in 2006 that included new greens, bunkers, additional fairway drainage, cement cart paths and fleet of electric carts. The course closed for a year during renovations and re-opened for business as the Great Recession started taking hold.

Jimmy Alston

Eagle Creek Golf and Country Club

Golf Course Architecture, May 24

Golf course architect Gordon Lewis is leading a renovation project at the Eagle Creek Golf and Country Club near Naples. Work began in mid-May at the Larry Packard-designed course, where Lewis will be working to enhance playability. Bunkering will be renovated, and landing areas on fairways and green approaches will be reshaped as part of the project.

"The primary focus of the renovation will be on Eagle Creek's

four famous finishing holes," said Jimmy Alston, golf course superintendent at Eagle Creek. "These holes are proven to be some of the best in Florida as this is a signature of Larry Packard's golf course designs."

Multiple turfgrass species will be introduced, and more than 50 acres of rough will be replaced with Celebration bermudagrass. The project also has a strong ecological angle, with consideration for the presence of both freshwater and saltwater at Eagle Creek and the mix of plants and animals that coexist due to this.

Cory Adams

Golf Village at The Club at Admirals Cove

Dick Gray

PGA Golf Club

The Sun Sentinel, May 28

If you've ever had a par or birdie putt headed for the bottom of the cup only to have it deflected off line by an unrepaired ball mark, then you know how maddening that breach of etiquette can be. Now imagine how frustrating that is to a golf course superintendent who has to deal with the damage left by unrepaired ball marks on 18 or more greens.

"Research has shown that a repaired ball mark recovers weeks faster than an unrepaired one," said Cory Adams, the superintendent of Golf Village at The Club at Admirals Cove in Jupiter, which comprises 27 holes. "It takes 48 hours to recover if a ball mark is repaired properly. If not, it takes weeks to recover."

Adams, who has a bachelor's degree in agronomy from Mississippi State University, said that when he worked at Ibis Golf and Country Club in West Palm Beach, there was a photo of one of the club's 54 greens hanging in the pro shop. It was an island green, so as Adams noted, golf balls either hit the green or landed in the water. One day, one of the pros put a golf ball in every unrepaired ball mark, then took a photo of the green with 900 balls on it.

People who belong to a golf club and don't repair their ball marks leave Dick Gray shaking his head. "That's called ownership. We've always said that if you're a member of something, that golf course should be an extension of your family," said Gray, the director of agronomy at PGA Golf Club, who began his career in the 1960s and last year oversaw the restoration of the Dye Course, one of the four courses in Port St. Lucie owned by the PGA of America.

"You wouldn't take a cigarette and drop it in your living room or your family room. You're not going to do it. Take care of the place."



Michael Wallace

Naples Lakes Country Club

Naples Daily News, June 3

Naples Lakes Country Club announced it has retained its designation as a certified Audubon cooperative sanctuary through the Audubon cooperative sanctuary program for golf courses, an international program. With more than 200 acres of protected nature preserves and lakes, NLCC is one of 904 courses in the world and 111 in Florida to achieve this prestigious designation. Michael Wallace, the club's golf course superintendent, led the effort to maintain sanctuary status on the course, which earned the same designation in 2001. The course is currently spending \$3.2 million to renovate its Arnold Palmer-designed championship golf course. Completion of the new course is expected in November.

Scott McCoy

Naples Grande Golf Club

WINK News, June 8

An unusual hazard popped up Thursday on the fairway near the first tee at Naples Grande Golf Club. A single-engine plane made an emergency landing just before 1pm at the course on 7540 Golden Gate Parkway, the Collier County Sheriff's Office said. No one was hurt.

"It was a little bit scary there for a little while," Naples Grande golf course superintendent Scott McCoy said. "Pilot did a great job." The plane flew into the Naples Municipal Airport from Fort Lauderdale and was headed back when it experienced engine failure, the sheriff's office said.

"You could obviously tell the plane was malfunctioning," McCoy said. "It was fluttering up and down and then just did a real good, soft controlled landing in the No. 1 fairway." The golf course wasn't damaged, staff said.

Tim Campbell

Palm Beach Par 3 Golf Course

Palm Beach Daily News, June 17

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the 2010 cold snap negatively impacted the iguana and reports of sightings were down, but population numbers seem to have bounced back. The Palm Beach Par 3 golf course superintendent Tim Campbell noticed most of the iguanas were gone after "the great freeze" of 2010, but he started noticing them again a couple years ago.

In a short golf-cart drive around the course this week, a dozen iguanas could be seen sunbathing and darting across the greens. "The biggest one I've seen is about three-feet long," Campbell said. ■

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Streamsong Event to Feature Bunkers, Shooting and Golf



Bruce Hepner



Bunkers may drive golfers to distraction but most of them have no idea just how much grief these hazards-by-design can cause a golf course superintendent. From sand type to drainage to edging and so much more, bunkers can consume a disproportionate amount of a golf course maintenance budget. But of

course, they are so much more than somewhere golfers shouldn't go. They often frame holes and dictate lines of sight and strategy testing a golfer's nerve as well as skill.

Those aspects of bunkering and more will be the focus of the Florida GCSA's third annual roundtable discussion at Streamsong Resort near Bowling Green on August 3. Rusty Mercer is director of agronomy at Streamsong. The roundtable precedes the Florida GCSA golf championship, team championship and two-man scramble on the Streamsong Blue course the following day. It will feature Bruce Hepner, of Renaissance Golf Design and owner of Hepner Golf Design, who helped create Streamsong Blue and whose hands have been on many high profile projects across the country.

As Tom Doak's vice-president with Renaissance for 17 years, Hepner ran or worked on 18 new projects around the world that included Cape Kidnappers in New Zealand, Ballyneal in Colorado and Pacific Dunes in Oregon. Hepner Golf Design specializes in remodeling and restorations. He won the 2017 Golf Digest Best Renovation Award for his work at the Piping Rock Club in New York City.

The roundtable and golf event coincide with the Florida GCSA annual business meeting. This year's event will also include a sporting clays shoot as part of continued efforts to expand the appeal of the annual date. Florida GCSA director and golf committee chair Steve Wright, CGCS from Pine Tree Golf Club in Boynton Beach stresses that the golf team championship and scramble are open to all Florida GCSA members. The team championship is also a qualifying event for the Florida GCSA team to compete at GCSAA's national championship, which returns to San Antonio, TX next year.

And the Survey Says ...

The Florida GCSA board of directors is grateful to all those superintendents and affiliates who took time to participate in the recent membership survey. The survey aimed to gather that data to help the board gauge satisfaction across a range of membership services and frame possible adjustments or initiatives.

Close to 200 superintendents and vendors took part and returned an overwhelming vote of confidence in how the association is performing. Ninety-two percent of respondents said the association was "exceeding" or "meeting" their expectations. Less than half of one percent said the association was "falling below" expectations.

"Regardless of whether the feedback was good or bad, we appreciate everyone making the effort to let us know through the survey," Ricky Reeves, Florida GCSA president from Miami Beach Golf Club, says.

Eddie Mullins from Meadowbrook Golf and Country Club won an Apple 42mm Smart Watch when his name was drawn from among survey respondents. The affiliate winner of a \$100 Best Buy gift card was Wilson Randolph of Suncoast Turf Products.

Governor Scott Calls in on RGF



Florida Governor Rick Scott shakes hands with RGF Environmental Group principal Ron Fink.

Florida Governor Rick Scott visited RGF Environmental Group, Inc. during his "Fighting for Florida's Future" tour. A global manufacturer headquartered in Riviera Beach, RGF has created more than 50 new jobs over the past four years, currently employs over 130 Floridians, and is actively seeking new hires to fill 25 new work stations.

RGF manufactures and produces air, food and water purification and sanitation systems for homes, schools, office buildings, hotels, cruise ships, food processors, hospitals and industrial water treatment systems.

Ron Fink, president, founder and chief executive officer of RGF Environmental Group, says, "RGF was proud to welcome Governor Scott to our facility. Our mission is to provide the world with the safest air, water and food, and Florida has proven to be an excellent location for us to work on meeting that important goal. We appreciate Governor Scott's focus on supporting tax cuts and economic development programs like Enterprise Florida that make it easier for Florida businesses like RGF to succeed, and we look forward to continuing to grow."

Superintendents Build Ties with Rep. Mast



Ryan Swilley, Ralph Dain, Jennifer Bryan, Rep. Brian Mast and Eric Stevens, CGCS, MG after their meeting.

Golf course superintendents spent constructive time discussing issues affecting the profession with Rep. Brian Mast (R-18) in North Palm Beach recently. The meeting was brokered by Erin Stevens, CGCS, MG from Emerald Dunes Club in West Palm Beach who serves as GCSAA's grassroots ambassador in the district. He was joined by Ryan Swilley from Gulfstream Golf Club in Gulf Stream, Florida GCSA executive director Jennifer Bryan and GCSAA field representative Ralph Dain.

"We covered a broad range of issues," Stevens says. "The meeting was definitely a success. We went over all action items from National Golf Day and added items such as BMPs, Americans with Disabilities Act and veterans outreach."

Stevens says Rep. Mast agreed to co-sponsor the PHIT Act which, if passed, would allow Americans to use pre-tax medical accounts to pay for physical activity expenses, possibly including golf. The goal is to provide incentive for adults and their children to get, thereby fit helping reduce healthcare costs related to preventable chronic diseases.

Rep. Mast also agreed to speak during next year's PGA Merchandise show in support of efforts to make the game more accessible to people with disabilities. The National Alliance for Accessible Golf (a golf industry alliance) is hosting an education forum during the week of the show in January. Rep. Mast lost both legs in the U.S. Army but still plays golf and takes his son to play.

"We also discussed the desire for GCSAA to team up with Rep. Mast for veterans programs and needs," Stevens says. "He seems very open to it. During the meeting, I felt and I am sure others do, that he was asking how he could help and what he could do."

Stevens says he and Swilley, who also serves as a GCSAA grassroots ambassador, assigned to Rep. Ted Deutch (D-22), discussed concept of a program to help get veterans them involved in golf course maintenance and education after they come out of the



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service. "One of the big issues for us these days is finding good people coming into the industry," Stevens says. "Many veterans have the work ethic and attitude that would make them a good fit for this industry."

Pantaleo Teams Up With Coach Pitino



Florida GCSA past-president Joe Pantaleo and Louisville coach Rick Pitino, with their hands on the ball, played guard for the Redbirds in a recent Masters Basketball Association tournament.

Joe Pantaleo is far better known as a golf course superintendent than he is as a basketball player but that has never stopped him feeding his lifelong passion. Pantaleo, who has spent the past 22 years at Indian Creek Country Club in Miami, is 60 now but he has been hunting up and down basketball courts since he was six.

Recently, he teamed with some guys who did make a name for themselves in the game. Pantaleo put together a team that included Louisville Cardinals coach Rick Pitino and Reggie Theus, who spent 15 years in the NBA with the Chicago Bulls and Sacramento Kings. He later coached the Kings and at one time was an assistant to Pitino at Louisville.

Pantaleo's team of players 55 and over competed in a tournament in May run by the Masters Basketball Association based in Coral Springs. They played four games in four days, a schedule that confirmed something Pantaleo has known for a long time. "The secret to being able to keep playing at my age is to never stop

playing," he says. "If you stop playing for a few years and come back, the running will kill you."

That is pretty much what happened to the biggest stars on the team dubbed the Redbirds because Pantaleo is a big fan of MLB's St. Louis Cardinals and also in deference to Pitino's Cardinals. By the fourth day and game of the tournament both Pitino and Theus had to sit out. "Their groins just couldn't keep up," Pantaleo laughs.

Pantaleo recruited Pitino to his team over a brief exchange at Indian Creek where Pitino is a member and was playing golf. "I asked him if he knew anyone over 55 who could run and told him why," Pantaleo says. "He said 'no' but that he would think about it. He drove 10 yards in the cart and then stopped and said, 'Joe, I'll play.'"

Pitino even drew up some plays for the Redbirds who lost a close game, lost another "badly" then won to get into the semi-finals where Pantaleo says, two players down, they were "smoked." "It was a little intimidating at first playing on the same team but then you start running and sweating," says Pantaleo, who is also a season ticket holder with the Miami Heat.

Since the tournament he has been "kind of recruited" to play in an over 50s league in Coral Springs. That's in addition to his long-running involvement with Sunday morning and Tuesday evening leagues. Although Pantaleo admits that he sometimes skips one or two of those dates. "At our age you need the recovery time," he says.

Florida Recipient In Legacy Awards

Casey Duffy, child of Sean Duffy, CGCS from Isleworth Country Club in Windermere, is one of 20 recipients of GCSAA's 2017 Legacy Awards. The program is funded through GCSA's philanthropic organization, the Environmental Institute for Golf, and Syngenta. The awards provide \$1,500 scholarships to the children and grandchildren of GCSAA members who have been active for five or more consecutive years. Duffy is an incoming freshman majoring in agricultural education at Lake Sumter State College.

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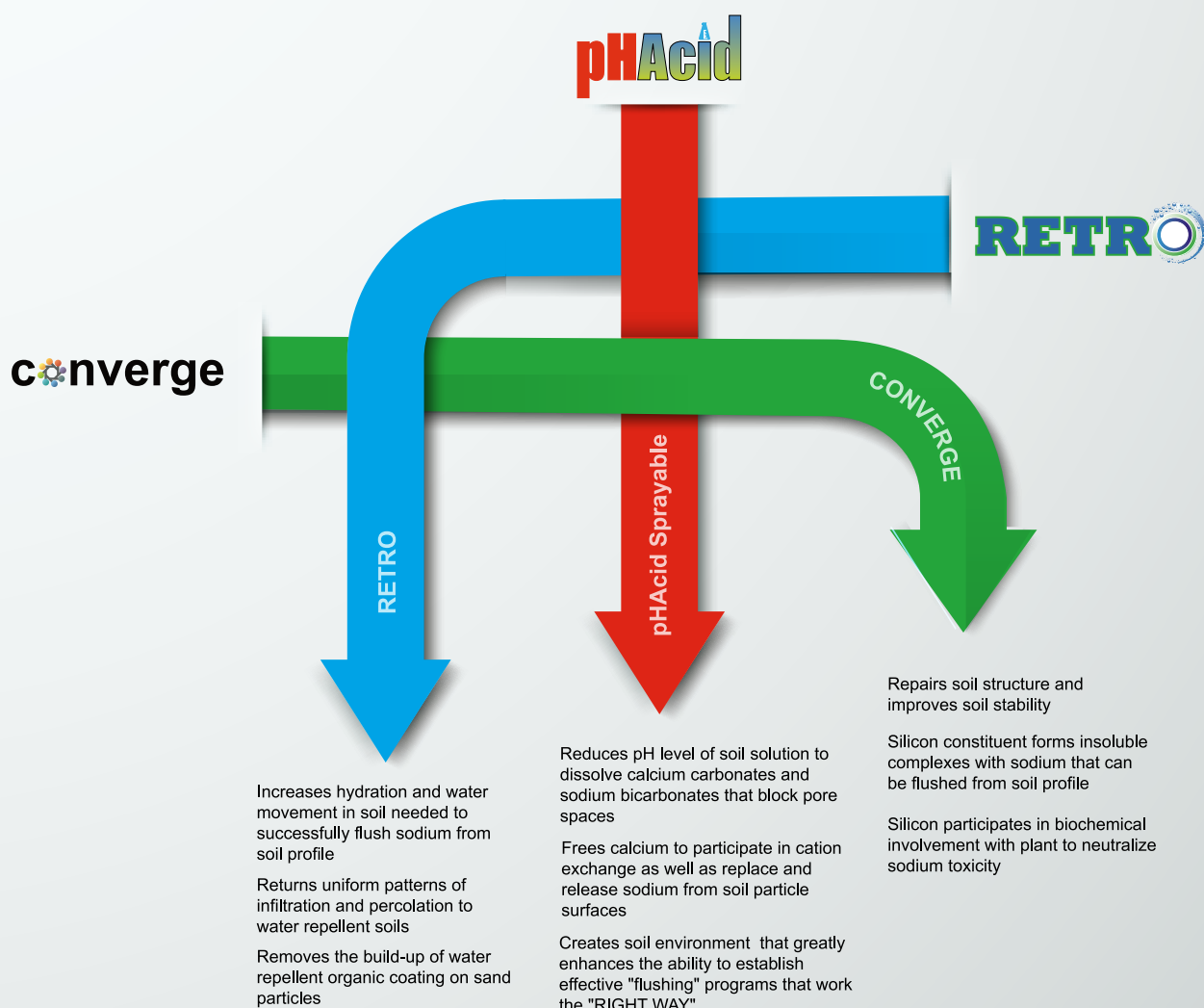
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You're Not Heavy, You're My Brother

In my travels around the state I have been visiting with superintendents who have been dodging the rain and trying to complete a variety of summer time tasks. Even though I am almost 10 years removed from my time as a superintendent, I still recall how challenging it can be trying to get these maintenance practices accomplished. It seems Mother Nature always has the last word.

Despite the curveballs that come up on a routine basis, superintendents seem to roll with the punches. Although, I am seeing more and more individuals who seem to be at their limit. Being asked to do so much more with limited resources. Budgets have been cut and positions eliminated to a detrimental point for the facility.

I have had the occasion to speak with several individuals at lower budget facilities and I can see the angst in their eyes. I know many of them are concerned about their ability to provide acceptable conditions at the club or the impact that the cutbacks may have on their job security.

What I am about to write may sound crazy, especially with limited employee numbers. But the superintendents that find themselves in a situation like I am describing may well benefit from the networking opportunities that come with participation in their GCSAA chapters, whether at a state level with the Florida GCSA or with their local chapters. A great wealth of information can be exchanged as superintendents network during these chapter functions. Maybe a new perspective on some old issues will be revealed during these interactions. Or very likely, you will find that you are not the only one dealing with particular issues.

In the bigger picture, GCSAA exists to serve superintendents and assist them in achieving their goals and provides a number of programs and services in an effort to advance the profession. The chapter outreach department that field staff positions are a part of is dedicated to working with chapters to provide individuals the best services possible.

I guess what I am saying is that nobody should go it alone. There is a brotherhood among superintendents that is not superficial. On more than one occasion, I received help in times of stress during my career from a colleague or two. I have yet to be disappointed in the response from members of a chapter when one of their own finds themselves in need. I am always moved by the benevolence of the individuals who have chosen this field to make their living.

I understand that finding the time to participate may sometimes be a challenge. However, most every chapter I deal with provides options that allow you to attend just the meeting (which is usually free), lunch and or golf. The key is to find the amount of time that



Ralph Dain and Greg Pheneger from Johns Island Club go way back in the profession and share not just a sense of brotherhood in the profession but also the same taste in shirts.

fits your schedule and at least participate in what you can. I know you will benefit from these interactions.

The weight on your shoulders is heavier when you try to go at everything alone. Allow others to help you by participating in chapter functions and building a network that may assist in reducing your stress levels. There are so many good people that will be willing to support you in your endeavors.

I may not be your first choice, but I am more than willing to lend a hand or a thoughtful ear whenever the need arises. Just call me and I will be glad to be of service. ■

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

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