

Within the Leather

by David Kazmierczak CGCS

I had the good fortune of attending the MGCSA Scramble at Golden Valley

assistants and possibly other key members of my team with an enjoyable day of golf and camaraderie whenever possible. If there was an educational element involved, that was even better. I considered it part of our compensation package, and basically budgeted for it every year. I still do. We do not make it to every event, but rare is the year we cannot make it to at least half of them. I doubt there are many others who can say that.

Golf and Country Club on June 11th. It was a sun-splashed day, rather windy with a touch of chill in the air which was welcomed by most of the competitors since it was hot, sticky and very windy the day before.

I do not make that statement as a boast, or in any way look down upon any member who does not regularly attend monthly meetings. Every member has his or her own idea of what the MGCSA means to them. Every member has their own agenda, budget considerations, personal reasons for attending or not. It was simply very refreshing to see a packed house, and if one dives deeper into the meaning of the full event- very important.

My team, comprising my two assistants and my brand spanking new rough mower, managed our usual middle of the pack finish. The lunch and appetizers afterward were very good. The golf course was in fantastic condition, and I would like to send a big shout out to Superintendent Jeff Ische and his crew for providing the quality track for all of those who played that day.

“The Scramble” as it is now called, is actually a combination of what used to be the Scholarship Scramble and the Research Scramble. There used to be two events, but because of lack of support, the MGCSA condensed the two into one. The MGCSA is not alone in dwindling participation in local events. It seems many of our countries’ local Superintendent organizations have seen massive declines in monthly meeting attendance, with the majority of attendees being vendors. That is not every association, as a review of web sites or association magazines finds more

Everywhere I looked both before, during, and after the round I saw smiling, happy faces that were having a great time at a great venue. But the most significant thing of note was the number of those broad grins. For the first time, in what seems to me a couple of years, this MGCSA event was sold out.

When I started as superintendent at Prestwick on 2001, one of my priorities was to attend as many MGCSA events as I could, and to reward my

opportunities for meetings and get-togethers than the MGCSA currently holds, but some are struggling for attendance as well. The sour economy surely has a lot to do with this, but it seems to me apathy plays a large part as well. This is not a good trend, and here are a few reasons why.

These meetings are an extremely important component of what the association is. If there are no more meetings, or if you do not attend meetings you are not getting the full experience of belonging to the MGCSA. The scramble supports the University of Minnesota's Turf Research program. This program, which is always in need of funding, produces results that directly affect each and every person in this local industry whether they realize it or not. The scholarship part is a wonderful program supporting students who need money for school more than ever.

These meetings are basically subsidized by our Affiliates. If support dwindles to nothing, where is the incentive for them to keep supporting them? The idea is for the vendors to reach superintendents in a relaxed and friendly setting, and for vendors to show support for superintendents by providing funding for these association events. If the ratio of Superintendents to Affiliates is 3-1 or 4-1 on a consistent basis, there might not be many more meetings, or at least not too many more meetings with an affordable price tag.

If golf is just not the way you as a superintendent want to spend your free

time, there are other ways to be involved, or other events you can show your support at. The point is, now more than ever, the MGCSA needs superintendent's participation, or their assistant's participation, or multiple staff member's participation. The truth is that there were a few people at the scramble who were not association members, as the decision was made to open up the tournament with the requirement that only one member of a foursome be an MGCSA member. That was a solid decision, and directly resulted in the sellout of the event. It would be really nice if that didn't have to be standard procedure just to fill the event's tee sheet.

The next event will be at the end of August- the MGCSA Championship- at New Richmond Golf Club, followed by the Wee One event in October and the increasingly popular fall clay shooting event at the Horse and Hunt Club. I encourage any member on the fence to take part in at least one of these events. The networking and conversation are invaluable, and the more participation the better for the support of the MGCSA. Hopefully, the full room at the Golden Valley Golf and Country Club with the smiling faces will become the norm again, and the future picture will include your happy mug as well.