



Within the Leather

by David Kazmierczak CGCS

With the season winding down and a closing date in the near future, I

always take a moment to reflect back upon the year and digest what went right and what went wrong with our operation. I find it a very useful endeavor to try and capitalize on the successes, and remedy the failures. Ultimately, the changes and tweaks over the winter lead to one very important aspect for the future season: the idea of progress.

Progress by definition is the advancing of thoughts and/or actions by an individual or group to further a concept or goal in a positive manor. It is the very essence of why people are in business. The idea is to make progress, or be progressive from the simplest of jobs to the overall operation. To not make progress is to become stagnant, or even worse, regress.

So what about your operation? Take a moment to think about it. Did you make progress this year? Did you and your crew accomplish a large common goal? Did you expand your operation? Did you build a new bunker or add a new irrigation head? Did you add a new product line or expand your customer base?

Are you satisfied with what you accomplished this year, or did you fall into the trap of being adequate? Did you do the same thing as last year with the same result, with the same people, doing the same

things? Are you satisfied with that?

I am willing to bet the answer is no to the last question. It has been my observation that generally, people in the turf industry are not the complacent type. They are innovators either by necessity or design. They are constantly trying to figure out ways to make things better, more efficient, and ultimately lead to progress.

That same idea of progress is currently permeating the management of the MGCSA. It had been suggested by some that the MGCSA had become stagnant: The same thing, at the same time with the same results. Some of the comments I heard included one particularly glaring one, surmising that all a member really got from their paid dues was access to job listings and a magazine. Whether this was true or not is up to debate, but I believe that idea of stagnation was the backbone for the change in the executive director position at the end of last year. In case you have been understandably too busy to notice, let me give you a quick update on what is different with the MGCSA from this point a year ago.

A complete overhaul of the MGCSA website has taken place. It is now functional, reliable and full of information and quick, easy access. It is light years ahead of its' predecessor, and there are many more functional components that will be added in the future.

The Hole Notes publication you are reading is completely digital, giving the MGCSA the capability of producing a high quality information source without breaking the budget to send out a physical copy. The

magazine has also progressed style-wise and will continue to evolve.

The MGCSA event schedule has evolved, and will continue to evolve. There is a commitment by the board and the event committee to add new and different events while strengthening the already popular ones. Attendance has been up at a majority of the events this year over last year, and hopefully this will continue to rise.

Jack MacKenzie has demonstrated an amazing amount of enthusiasm and commitment at the executive director position, the likes of which have never been seen before. Lack of ideas and ambition will never be attached to his name. This commitment will pay off not only in your up-front dealings with the MGCSA, but there is a lot of behind the scenes things Jack is doing that will help you in the future without you even realizing it. Things like being involved in government affairs, being present and advocating the association with other associations, and generally being on top of matters concerning the association, that were not conducted in the past.

I really think this is the tip of the iceberg. There are some pretty progressive individuals on the MGCSA board, and within the MGCSA membership. There will be many ideas both large and small that will help the MGCSA evolve into a bigger and better association. Some will work well, some might not, but at least there is an impetus and desire to progress.

The latest big idea will be presented to the association at the annual MGCSA meeting in a few months. The idea is to directly fund research that we want and need at the T.R.O.E center at the University of Minnesota. While not a new concept,

(other turfgrass associations have similar support mechanisms to local universities), it is potentially a bold new step for the MGCSA. It is an opportunity to say yes, we care about turfgrass research and we want to do something about it. It will be a direct benefit to every member of the MGCSA and their facilities, and could lead to much bigger and better things in the future. What it takes is a commitment to funding.

All the great ideas in the world start with an idea, and the need to be funded. Currently, the MGCSA annual dues are \$115 per member. If you look around the country, or even the world, you will notice that that figure is rather low in comparison. The New England chapter is at \$150. Carolinas are at \$165. Ontario chimes in at a nice round \$173. Our neighbors to the east are at \$150. Iowa is at \$100, but why would we want to be like Iowa? (Just kidding, of course, many of my former assistants were from Iowa.) The point I am trying to make is that this idea is solid, progressive and puts the MGCSA in line with the rest of the country.

It takes many things to forge progress. It takes time, effort, work, planning, money, and many other things I am sure I am omitting, but mostly it takes commitment. I see a great deal of commitment from the leaders of the MGCSA to further and better the association. If you, the members of the association, have not noticed it yet, check it out. The leaders are leading, they just need the association members to commit to joining in if they have not already.