



MID-ATLANTIC

News Letter



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Pity the Poor Student

When was the last time you hired a turf student — Mr. Superintendent? I am not speaking of the summer time person that is gone in the fall. I am speaking about the turf school graduate. Many of us have hired summertime placement students from turf schools, but these individuals leave to go back to school and don't present a problem to us as far as having to lay them off for the winter. The turf school graduate is another problem. Consider what you have done for that summer student. You have helped well round his education by giving him some valuable field experience. You have given him a little more attention and responsibility than the average crewman. You have made him want to be a superintendent of his own course some day. You have imparted some of your knowledge to him and in return you have had some more technically oriented labor. Now it is one year later and you have a turf school graduate at your door. What now — Mr. Superintendent? What are you going to do for that kid you encouraged last year? What if you had two or three of the students? Are you going to hire this technician in May and lay him off next winter? Unless you are looking for an assistant, or planning to build a smaller full time crew from students, you have a problem. It is not feasible to keep these students all year unless you have room or a large budget. You probably already have the nucleus of a good crew that's been with you for some time. You have just burst that kid's bubble.

Maybe we as superintendents could help to relieve this situation by reviewing our position on hiring students. Ten years ago the industry was screaming for qualified people to maintain golf courses. Those of us coming out of school back then had unlimited opportunities. This is not the case today. For the last 10 years many colleges have been pumping out turf students and now the supply far exceeds the demand. For example, out of eleven students graduating from the two year program at the University of Maryland, only two have jobs as assistants or better. As we all know, the Superintendents Association aids deserving students by awarding scholarships. We also give many dollars to fund turf research and create a better atmosphere for our students. What can we as superintendents do to help ease this frustrating situation for the students? This is a very good question with very few good answers. The next time a young person comes to you for advice on a

Golf Course Superintendent's career, be honest with him and yourself. Sure, you love your field of endeavor, you'd have to, to stay in this business, but think before you talk. Don't build this kid up for what might be a big let down. When you talk to this young person, don't tell just the good parts, point out to him that the bad days sometimes outnumber the good. Tell him that a good portion of your life is spent on that golf course and that it's a truly dedicated person that becomes a superintendent. If possible, have this individual work with you before he enters school. Check out his working habits, see if he's got what it takes. Be honest with him, if you have any doubts about him, discuss it with him. This business isn't for just anyone. If he's not ready, tell him; you will be doing him a favor. If you really think he's ready, push him, he'll overcome any obstacle if he really wants it.

The only good way to stop the overcrowding is to encourage the exceptional individual.

Wayne Evans

The President's Message

Now that we have absorbed this past winter's education from our turf conferences, let's look ahead to this coming season and apply the worthwhile knowledge we gained from listening to our speakers. It would be a waste of time and money if we came home and put aside all that we learned or read over the winter months. This past winter in the Mid Atlantic area has been one of the most unusual for many years past. During January, some areas in metropolitan Washington had minimum temperatures of 30 or less every day of the month. In contrast, February has some of the warmest weather on record, reaching as high as 80° on the seventeenth. What ever happened to those good old snowy winters? With this printing the golfing season will be in full swing and we will be too busy to think about all the play we had this past winter; we can only dream about enjoyable skiing and sledding on our courses next winter. Have a good season.

David Fairbank