

Environmental Awareness and Community Outreach: A Win-Win Combination

Every year, it seems as though the demands made upon superintendents are greater. To keep pace with increasing demands, we are forced to multitask and budget our time more efficiently. In the rush, sometimes tasks that are of lower priority become delayed or simply slip through the cracks and are postponed indefinitely. But what if we could focus a small amount of our time and energy on a task that would reap rewards tenfold? I believe that this is the case when we are talking about environmental awareness and community outreach.

Through community outreach, you instantly touch the individuals that are directly involved in the project. This includes both the people from your facility who assist you, as well as the group participating in the event.

Who should we involve? Take your pick: Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Brownies, a local church's children's group, a local grade-school class, children from the local homeowners association, children of your crew members, Big Brother or Big Sister organizations. If you prefer to deal with adults, how about the local garden club, homeowners association, parent-teacher association, any neighborhood or community group—the list is almost endless.

What type of project or presentation should you put together? There are many different possibilities. This fall, we are planning to bring a group of Scouts out to the course on a Monday afternoon. They will go on a hay-wagon ride through the course to collect fall leaves from the various types of trees. For during the ride, we have enlisted the help of a local naturalist to talk about the trees that are native to the area and our program to reintroduce native trees onto the property. They will also discuss the ecological benefits of the course to the community and the environment in general. Following the hay ride, the children will work in small groups to help assemble bluebird houses that will be installed on the course. The kids will be invited back to check on the houses.

Throw in some milk and cookies, along with handouts from the GCSAA and the USGA on the benefits of golf courses to the environment, and hit the pro shop up for some free logo caps, and you have an effective community outreach program.

Other ideas for outreach programs include:

- Meet with a garden club or homeowners association to discuss IPM;
- Make a presentation to a grade-school class explaining the role of plants and photosynthesis in the food chain;
- Invite club members or golf patrons to attend a meeting to discuss the handling, use and storage of pesticides on the golf course;
- Involve a local group in a project to restore a naturalized area on the golf course;
- Adopt a section of roadway adjacent to your facility and use your crew to police it for trash; or
- Use your crew to participate in clean-up projects at local parks.


Now for the rewards of such outreach. Through community outreach, you instantly touch the individuals that are directly involved in the project. This includes both the people from your facility who assist you, as well as the

group participating in the event. So now the question is how to spread this information to touch a larger group of people and maximize the event's impact. Certainly, the individuals that participate in the program will tell their friends and acquaintances about the event, so their positive experience will spread by word of mouth. Here are a few further ideas:

- Write an article about the event for the newsletter at your facility and post the article on your Web site.
- Send an article with pictures to your local newspaper.
- Use the event as part of your participation in Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) for Golf Courses.
- Post pictures from the event on the bulletin board at your facility.
- Send an article with pictures to the group that participated in the event so that they can include it in their newsletter.
- Send an article with pictures to the homeowners association located adjacent to your facility so that they can include it in their newsletter and they are aware of your work within the community.
- Write a press release and send it along with pictures to local agencies, including the local cable channel, radio station, community centers and the public library. You may try this technique in advance of your event—who knows, maybe a reporter or other representative will show up to document the proceedings.

- Send a summary of your community outreach event to the MAGCS Environmental Committee. One of our objectives is to share the environmental efforts of MAGCS members with the Chicagoland community. If you have participated in any community outreach programs that have dealt with environmental awareness, please send me a summary of the event and we will use the information to write a press release that will be sent out to local news agencies.


Remember, too, participating in community outreach can give you a sense of personal satisfaction and, since it can be tied to the ACSP, it indirectly assists you in earning PDUs that can count toward GCSAA recertification. This type of community outreach can also be used under the communications section of the PDR self-evaluation program offered through the GCSAA.

So there it is, rewards tenfold generated from a single event, and in the process a large group of individuals from outside our industry will be made aware of our efforts regarding environmental stewardship. Wouldn't it be nice if all of the activities into which we invest our energy could be so productive? 

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this appointment as the entire Board of Directors looks forward to working with him.

It has become increasingly difficult for me to come up with topics to write about, so I hope I haven't repeated myself too many times. At the recent Kane County Cougars baseball game outing, I was asked if I would miss being part of the Board of

Directors? The first thing out of my mouth was an emphatic "NO" but after a second, I had to concede, "Yes," because serving on the Board becomes such a big part of you. I know it will be difficult to leave. "NOT!!!" Okay . . . just a little. 

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