

FEATURE I

Dan Dinelli, CGCS, North Shore Country Club



We Are Golf

April 18th, National Golf Day 2012 occurred in Washington D.C. Yes there is a "day" for golf, and GCSAA along with several allied groups took full advantage to share the positive impacts golf has on communities around the country. This was the fifth such meeting in Washington D.C. with an agenda that grows each year. Collectively, 80 meetings were organized to share golf's story with various Senators and Representatives. The message was clear, "Golf is much more than a game." At 76 billion dollars, golf is bigger than the motion picture industry with a total economic impact on the United States economy of 195 billion dollars, as it provides nearly two million jobs. In Illinois, where 683 golf facilities call home, 50,466 jobs were directly related to golf, with an economic output of \$4.8 billion in 2007. In today's economy and the concern with unemployment, tax revenue and economic health, clearly the business of golf has a powerful statement.

Golf gives back to the people.

Golf is a life-long activity that offers countless benefits to overall wellness. In addition to the social benefits, golf offers an outdoor activity that burns up to 2,000 calories, equivalent to walking five miles during a typical 18 hole round.

Golf also gives back to people in ways beyond the golfer themselves. In 2005 golf gave \$3.5 billion to many national charitable causes. Approximately 16,000 golf facilities throughout the country hosted fundraising events for various charities and causes.

Golf Gives back to the planet.

The importance of open green space is becoming more and more critical. Golf courses around the country represent 2,020,060 acres. These are acres that: provide habitat for wildlife, release oxygen and utilize CO₂, prevent soil erosion, filter and store storm water and cool the atmosphere.

Sustainability – the three "P's."

People, planet, profit... golf carries a strong position in all three areas. In life we feel pleased when a "win-win" situation can be obtained. With golf, a win-win-win situation exists within the sustainability model government and communities thrive for in their existence. And the real

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The 2012 GCSAA Government Relations Committee convened in Washington and met with legislators in the We Are Golf campaign.

bonus is the win-win holds true for golfers and non-golfers in communities where golf facilities exist. The economic (profit), environmental (planet) and social (people) contributions golf gives reach far beyond the golfer themselves. Wow! How many businesses can claim that? Clearly golf has a lot to be proud of and a powerful story to share... and that's what We Are Golf is all about.

The Coalition.

The GCSAA along with the PGA of America, World Golf Foundation, Club Managers Association, and National Golf Course Owners Association participated in We Are Golf as founding members. Many other companies and organizations also support the coalition such as the USGA, National Golf Foundation, Golf Channel, American Society of Golf Course Architects, Golf Course Builders Association and many suppliers who service the golf community. Collectively, events were organized by the Podesta Group to tell golf's story on sustainability within communities and draw attention to a few specific pieces of legislation in Acts within Congress.

We Are Golf supports HR 2718 and S 1456, the Disaster Tax Relief Act, an important inclusion for situations when

businesses get "relief" in areas declared as Federal Disaster Zones. Severe weather patterns seem more and more common around the country leaving devastation in its path. At present time, golf course facilities are excluded from disaster relief funds. It is critical that golf courses have access to these funds so they can rebuild from disasters in the same manner as other business within their communities.

We Are Golf supports HR 9, the small business Tax Cut Act of 2012. An incentive for small businesses (fewer than 500 employees) to help grow the economy by offering tax deductions up to twenty percent of the profits and up to fifty percent of their W-2 wages.

We Are Golf supports HR 1964, the Conservation Easement Incentive Act. Again, golf was excluded from this legislation. We believe golf courses should be allowed to take advantage of this tax relief as an incentive to secure important green space into long-term conservation easements.

At the end of the day We Are Golf did not ask for any "special treatment or exceptions." The only true "ask" was to be considered like any other business that contributes to sustainable communities.

*Kevin Breen, CGCS, Peter McDonough, CGCS. Dan Dinelli, CGCS,
US Congressman Robert Dold representing Illinois and Greg Lyman, GCSAA Director of Environmental Programs*





Budget cuts around the capital are apparent in their turf quality or lack thereof. It could be time to donate some time and materials to grow some quality turf around the place.

Making sense of it all

It is in situations like We Are Golf at National Golf Day in Washington DC that drives home the importance of it all. What I mean by “all” is *all* the efforts of so many on so many fronts that work at improving our profession and keeping golf healthy. The efforts of the GCSAA staff, past and present GCSAA Boards, Committees and work groups, collectively show critical value. The question often asked at the meetings in DC was “do you have data, standards or best management practices, case studies or examples you can share to help us better understand the outcomes and nature of your business?” When the response was... “you bet”, their heads and ears perked up and they listened. Specifically efforts in:

- Conducting surveys within the Golf Course Environmental Profile that generated data in Property Profiles and Environmental Stewardship; Water Use and Conservation Practices; Nutrient Use and Management; Energy Use and Management and Pest Management
- The IPM Template to help the superintendent through the thought process in developing a written IPM Plan
- The many case studies (and other resources) in the Environmental Resources area on GCSAA's newly designed web site supported by the Environmental Institute for Golf
- The support from the USGA, Environmental Institute for Golf and local Chapters and Turf Foundations, who contribute ten's of thousands of dollars towards scientific research to further our understanding in improving soil, plant and environmental health. Much of this information leads to best management practices and continuing education on how to effectively and efficiently utilize inputs and cultural practices safely.
- Best Management Grants, supported by the Environmental Institute for Golf, to help chapters fund efforts to further local needs towards sustainability.

These plus many other programs and services help superintendents be better stewards of the land, help manage costs with increased expectations and tell a story with a goal to lessen the burden of the increasing regulatory pressure. In many ways We Are Golf is just the beginning. It is clear that more and more people will be interested in what we are doing as stewards of the land. In some ways that is good for it demonstrates the importance of the environment that makes up golf courses. However, burdensome, ineffective regulation is costly and needs to be avoided. National Golf Day reached out to policy makers on a National level. The reality is, most concerning policy and regulations start at the local level. Local Governments have the freedom to restrict, regulate and control policy that can cause the most concern for those within the community. For example, Highland Park a northern suburb of Chicago, responded to public pressure by banning pesticide use on public parks with a desire to include local golf courses. What is happening in Highland Park can happen anywhere. But the point is reaching out, getting involved and education is important. A proactive approach is typically more productive and efficient then a reactive approach. There is more to do, but there is a lot to be proud of...we just need to stay active and tell the story. **-OC**

Dinelli stopped his taxi on the way to his hotel to capture this shot of the space shuttle Discovery on its way to DC to its final resting place the Smithsonian.

