

Golf Industry Show



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MAGCS

Each year at the Golf Industry Show I attend the Chapter Executives Session and this year I thought I'd share with the membership the items we discuss and talk about.

GCSAA has made it two years in a row; they finally realized it makes sense to have the CEO and some of the board members present at this meeting of Chapter Leaders and Executives.

In fact, Rhett Evans, GCSAA CEO, led off the session and making a parallel between what Nick Saban has been preaching about his success at Alabama. There "is no continuum for success, the program has to rebuild itself each year," Evans paraphrased and then followed with what the Association has to do the same to keep it a value for its membership. Evans stated it isn't good when members begin to question paying their dues each renewal period.

Evans then went on to give examples of the value of membership within GCSAA:

- A superintendent in Durango, CO was faced with total bans on all pesticides and GCSAA was able to provide him sound, scientific and reviewed data that put golf in a positive light not only economically, and recreationally but environmentally as well and helped to reverse the legislative action.
- The 2013 GCSAA budget has included another full-time equivalent (FTE) for more Government Relations to help with local laws and ordinances.

Evans then asked the group the question "why do we have associations?" There were a myriad of answers and as I listened to the group respond, I thought about how well the Midwest's mission statement covered the question. Evans expounded further by explaining that Associations allow individuals to "ban together" and this is especially important when trying to influence public policy – something the GCSAA is deeply rooted and committed to for the industry. He then used the term "holistic" when describing the approach GCSAA is taking when strategically representing the collective strength of the golf superintendent industry. He challenged us to collaborate with the GCSAA to work together on a national level.

Evans switched gears and touched on the importance of the EIFG and reported that between \$3-4 million was awarded in the past few years to fund over 150 scholarships, research and government relations activities. Through the newly secured Melrose (ex Toro CEO) gift, 17 superintendents were able to attend the GIS Education and Conference in San Diego.

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Evans then went on to explain that hopefully golf's slide (and the rest of our economies) has steadied. Golf has seen a decrease over the past years from \$76 to \$69 billion industry per year, 30 to 25.3 million golfers, and there have been 141 golf course closing in the last year. In closing Rhett asked if there were any questions of the group and the affiliation agreement was brought up. This was something that was extended by GCSAA the last week of December 2013, without much explanation, if any at all. GCSAA is reviewing the document and should have a new draft sometime this summer. I hope we see it before the chapter delegates meeting this fall so members will have time to review and comment.

Mark Woodhead, GCSAA Senior Director of Membership talked a little bit about how the GCSAA and local chapters will be using Google Docs to share databases, or at least for local chapters to upload our membership data. Though the ultimate goal of sharing data, (we send our membership

roster every year as part of the affiliation agreement) has never been made clear, it seems GCSAA will be looking for superintendent members of local chapters that are not members of GCSAA. GCSAA is trying to recapture its membership, which has been on a slide since a high of 22,400 six years ago and a slow decrease to over 17,000 (representing a decline of 4-4.5% each year).

A Rounds for Research update was given, a program the Midwest has signed up to participate in for the next two years. This is a program where golf courses are able to donate rounds to GCSAA and ultimately MAGCS – the rounds are auctioned off and after costs are deducted (20%) the funds are sent to us. MAGCS then is able to use the monies to fund local research.

Chava McKeel and our lobbyist Robert Helland (great name for a lobbyist...Bob give 'em Hell and...) stressed the importance of our lobbyist activities – that is being proactive. The firm he works for, Reed Smith and Associates, keeps a close eye on things that impact our industry. The key is getting and keeping our message in front of those who are proposing legislation. It is amazing what a little education and information can do when applied properly. Bob did give a little insight as to what he think will happen in the coming years of the current administration citing some type of immigration reform will happen, the EPA will continue its review of chemicals used in our industry, and that labor reforms will also occur. Bob feels confident in our strategy of staying involved

by seeing staffers and congress members often throughout the legislative calendar.

These presentations took a little longer than expected and our time for networking with other chapter executives was cut short. Most of us were still able to have a few conversations through lunch and I plan to continue my conversations this month while attending the Chapter Leaders Symposium with Dave Groelle, CGCS at headquarters in Kansas. By the way, the Chapter Leaders Conference is funded by the Williams Leadership Fund (our Williams, Bob and Bruce). Upon our return, Dave and I will have more to report. @




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