

RESEARCH + DOLLARS = SOLUTION

By CHIP POWELL
The Deerwood Club

During the past years, there have been several problems that have come up over and over again. I cannot count the number times I've heard superintendents lament about the problems of government regulation, energy, price and availability of fertilizers and pesticides and — more recently — the water shortage.

While there are no easy solutions to these difficult problems, I believe it is important for us all to realize there are some very constructive things we can do about them.

On the matter of government regulation, we need only look at how other industries are working with the problem to see what must be done. Other industries hire a lobbyist and put him to work watching the legislature to protect their interests.

At the recent F.T.G.A. board meeting in Orlando, this subject came up. The board has been investigating this matter and has discovered we could contract the services of a lobbyist, who is currently working with some other agriculturally concerned industries, for no more than \$10,000 per year.

It seems the only obstacle between us and this vital service is the money. It does not take much to figure out that this sum represents only about \$15 per year from each golf course in Florida. It is difficult for me to accept the idea that our industry cannot easily come up with this sum of money.

In regard to our dilemma with the increasing scarcity of water, fertilizers, pesticides and fuels, we also have a clearcut method of working on these problems. The method is called research.

One of the major problems we face with research is cost. Individual golf clubs cannot afford to equip and staff their own research and development departments. The only other option is for each club to come up with an affordable contribution to be joined with contributions from other concerns in the turf industry. The funds would then be directed into the hands of institutions that are set up to do research.

The Scholarship and Research Foundation of F.T.G.A. is the perfect organization to handle this. It is already organized, staffed and has non-profit status so all contribu-

tions are tax deductible. In addition, the staff is entirely volunteer and the foundation's small administrative cost is handled by the general fund of F.T.G.A. This means 100 per cent of every dollar donated goes directly to fund scholarship and research.

It is vital the club industry realize what a well-funded scholarship and research program offers. It is important to understand scholarship and research complement each other. One cannot exist without the other, as we will try to show in the following paragraphs.

Money directed towards scholarships accomplishes many things. First, if it is awarded to a graduate student, the student will do research for his graduate thesis. Hence, money spent in this way will not only yield some immediate research findings, but will also help train a researcher of tomorrow. Money awarded to undergraduate students will promote the training of the superintendents of tomorrow. This is extremely important because it is these trained professionals who will put the research findings to work in the field and help the industry realize the fruits of the money used to fund research.

I would like to point out that clubs are not capable of training a superintendent on location. They must rely on colleges and universities for that training. After employment the superintendent can keep up to date by taking advantage of continuing education made available by F.T.G.A., G.C.S.A.A. and local superintendents chapters. This is necessary but the fact remains that clubs must rely on colleges and universities for the initial training.

It must also be pointed out how desperately we need research. Consider these problems: mole crickets, contaminated grasses in putting greens, reduced pesticide availability, energy related problems, double digit inflation — and throw in the water shortage. Research findings in these areas could not only save the industry many dollars, but could mean the survival of golf turf as we know it today. I am not trying to be a prophet of doom; I am just trying to recognize our need to act and act soon.

In the case with scholarship and research, as with the lobbyist, money is our obstacle. However, in this area our need for money is much more substantial and much more difficult to attach a specific figure to. It is for this reason

(Continued on Page 8)

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F.T.G.A. and the Florida G.C.S.A. have agreed we should begin collecting \$500 per year from each 18 holes of golf in the state. One hundred courses would provide \$50,000, 200 courses \$100,000 and so on. There is no question the amount of funds needed to initiate the type of program we need is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. You need only look at your own budget to see what \$100,000 buys to appreciate how much money is needed.

This program has been promoted during the past months and is becoming very widely accepted. I have no official count of contributors yet, but several checks have already been received and numerous courses are committed to donate the funds between now and October when F.T.G.A. holds its conference and show.

Each superintendent in the state must get tuned into this idea and take responsibility for selling it to his club just as he would any other vital item in the budget. If funds are not in the present budget, they can be raised in many ways such as raffles and special tournaments held at the club. The presidents of the local superintendents chapters will be able to help in coming up with ideas on how to raise money or how to present it to the board of directors or whoever else must approve the expense at the club.

In about a month, F.T.G.A. will make available a brochure explaining the work of the Scholarship and Research Foundation. Later this year a slide set will be available for use with more detailed presentations. Local chapter presidents will be kept up to date on the progress of the brochure and slides, and it is to them that each superintendent should look for information and answers to questions.

I sincerely hope each of you will give these things serious thought. We should not let a minor amount of money stand between us and the vital services of a professional lobbyist, nor between us and a well-funded scholarship and research program.

Over the years there has been much criticism of how little our professional associations like F.T.G.A. do for us. If we truly want F.T.G.A. to do the things for us we so badly need, we must be committed enough to provide F.T.G.A. with the necessary funds. If we overlook the opportunity to do something about these annoying and costly problems now, we will have only ourselves to blame in the future for the unpleasant consequences of our inactivity. ■

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