



The Central Florida GCSA Chapter meets at the Alaqua CC where members learn the latest local, state and national information affecting golf course turf management.

Reality Bites: The Learning Never Ends

*If you can't
anticipate,
communicate,
appreciate and
participate in
the big picture,
you will have
wasted much of
your education.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "The things taught in schools and colleges are not an education, but the means of education."

We can argue till the cows come home about the pro's and con's of learning your basic skills in a two-year specialty program, or a traditional four-year program, or from the school-of-hard-knocks at a master craftsman's side.

No matter the varied paths we take to become a superintendent, it is how well we learn the important lessons along the way that matters most.

If you can't anticipate, communicate, appreciate and participate in the big picture, you will have wasted much of your education.

I have met outstanding superintendents from all walks of life and educational backgrounds. The one thing they all have in common is that they never stop learning or educating themselves. That education takes many forms. Reading. Traveling. Listening. Questioning. Conversing. Experimenting. Failing. Succeeding. Sharing.

These same successful superintendents can be found religiously attending their local chapter meetings, regional and national seminars, national and interna-

tional conferences and trade shows.

It is in these venues that the best minds gather. It is here that the good superintendent gleans the knowledge to feed his hungry mind. The good superintendent then takes new ideas and information back to his job and applies it for the betterment of his/her golf course.

We are obviously in the midst of an communication/information revolution. The wise will participate either for the adventure or at least for self defense and survival.

Those with closed minds, superintendents, owners and operators alike, will be swept away in time by the winds of change. It is education in all its forms that prepares us for the challenges of success.

*Joel D. Jackson, CGCS
Disney's Magnolia G.C.*

Mockery is The Best Form of Flattery

by Darren J. Davis

I once had a fellow superintendent tell me, "My success is not attributed solely to my knowledge and training." He added, "A large part of what I have done is based on things I have seen other superintendents do." He felt he was one of the best "copiers" in the business. If you knew who made that comment, I think you

would agree that it is an extremely humbling statement from a very intelligent person.

At the risk of copying him, I will tell you that I also have learned the art of copying! One of the best things about our profession is the free sharing of information that golf course superintendents practice on a daily basis.

I gain a vast amount of education from talking with my peers. I especially enjoy visiting the courses of some of my friends in the business. The following are a few of the innovative ideas they have shared with me.

**Mark Michaud,
Golf Course Superintendent, Pebble
Beach Golf Links**

At Pebble Beach, Mark grows Poa greens and ryegrass fairways. A lot of Mark's watering is done manually by "pulling a hose."

Mark wanted a method to transport the hoses around the course without taking up the needed space in his utility vehicles. To accomplish this, Mark has made a hose rack from two tire



Mark Michaud, golf course superintendent of Pebble Beach Golf Links, inspects one of his mounted hose racks.

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**What you can learn
from your peers**

*Cordgrass, above,
planted around the
maintenance facility at
Colliers' Reserve. Right,
the trailer attached to
the Hydroject at the
Merion Golf Club.
Below, the clipping
basket at equipment
wash area at
Congressional CC.*



rims and a support bracket bolted to his utility vehicles. The metal supports are welded to both the front and back of the rims so that the hose will rest securely in the groove.

**Tim Hiers, CGCS,
Golf Course Superintendent
Colliers Reserve**

If you look up the definition of “environmental steward” in the dictionary, you would find Tim’s picture. Tim has been a mentor to my environmental awareness.

One of the things I have copied from Tim is the use of cordgrass (*Spartina bakeri*) planted around the maintenance facility.

The cordgrass has many advantages. It provided a good wildlife habitat, forms a low level wind break, eliminates the need for pesticides, fertilizers, irrigation and mowing. Eliminating mowing not only saves labor hours but conserves fuel, oil, etc..

**Paul Latshaw, Sr.
Golf Course Superintendent,
Congressional Country Club**

Like many golf courses, Paul has an older maintenance facility. Paul was aware that he had a potential problem in the equipment wash area. He decided to bring his old site up to date since he is unable to currently build a new wash down area. The first step was to devise a way to capture solids/clippings.

He constructed a sump with a recessed lip and a stainless steel basket to fit in the sump. Once the grate is removed the basket can be pulled up with two handles. The bottom of the basket comes to a “V” and all four sides are stainless steel mesh. Using mesh sides decreases the weight of the basket making it easier to remove when it is full of clippings.

**Paul B. Latshaw,
Golf Course Superintendent,
Merion Golf Club**

When taking a tour of Paul’s equipment storage area I came across a unique item. Paul has designed a tow-behind trailer for his Toro Hydroject. The trailer eliminates the need for a second person, or for a vehicle. When the operator reaches his destination, the trailer is unhooked next to the quick coupler, the hose stretched out and the machine is ready to go.



The trailer is actually quite simple. A manual hose reel is mounted above the trailer to store the 3/4 inch hose. Attached to the side of the reel is the incoming water line. This rests on the bed of the trailer with the quick coupler attached when not in use. There is storage space on the bed of the trailer for tools, filters or other items that might be needed.

Paul and his staff have also built some very handy tool storage lockers. The lockers are made of wood and are very roomy. On the side of the locker is a tool storage rack so that hand tools can be secured safely.

There is also room for personal protection equipment and other small equipment. Paul has found that by assigning each employee his/her own tools they take greater pride in them and are less likely to break or lose them. In the long

An employee's individual small tool locker at the Merion Golf Club

run the extra cost up front easily pays for itself.

Conclusion

It is often too easy to become wrapped up in the hustle and bustle of our very demanding jobs and not get out and visit our peers. While playing golf at other courses is one way of achieving this, it is certainly not the only way. I am amazed at what you can learn from your fellow superintendents by taking a riding tour of their courses, or by just walking through their maintenance facilities.

A wise person once told me something that made a lot of sense. He said, "The day you stop learning is the day you die!"

Meetings and Conventions

by Scott Bell

The strength of an organization or association depends on the participation of its members. The same can be said for the meetings and conventions put on by these groups. The need for good participation by superintendents is equal at all levels,

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Whenever superintendents gather together at meetings or golf outings, the talk always turns to sharing ideas and solutions to problems... a surefire benefit to the individual and his club.



Trade shows offer a unique opportunity to do side-by-side comparisons of products and equipment... and maybe even save money by purchasing show specials.

starting at your local chapter right up to the GCSAA Conference and Show.

This participation is beneficial to both the individual and the organization. I've seen meeting sites range from maintenance buildings to civic centers and from restaurant nooks to posh hotel conference rooms. I've heard speakers from local sales reps and superintendents to pro golfers, golf course architects and Ph. D.'s.

No matter what the setting or who the speaker, the important thing is that we learn something from the experience and we participate. If you go to a meeting thinking that you know it all, then you probably won't learn too much. Good input and conversation by superintendents can raise a meeting to new heights and benefit many.

Local Chapter Meetings.

Meet Your Neighbors.

Discuss Local Problems

As a past president of a local chapter, I know the importance of good attendance, especially by superintendents. I am also a busy superintendent and father of four so I am aware of the demands on a busy person's time. Local meetings are a great place to exchange ideas and techniques with fellow turf managers.

They are also ideal spots to cultivate friendships with other superintendents and suppliers. Usually the local chapter meetings have speakers who address local, state or regional topics. Local meetings offer a perfect place to get a speaker that you may specifically want to hear.

Contact your local board members with all your speaker ideas. From past experience I know that a local or state education director is very receptive to and appreciative of any speaker leads that come their way. Good speakers are a real treat and an asset to all meetings.

Remember that usually it's just a handful of people that devote much of their own precious time to make the local meetings successful and informative. Poor attendance puts a bad taste in everyone's mouth. Especially the host superintendent who spends extra manhours and effort to present a perfect golf course to his peers.

I think that with most meetings that I have attended, the superintendent has the course in member-guest shape! Poor attendance is like a slap in the face to the

host! We are very fortunate that we get to play many fine well-groomed courses. Consider that most self-motivated people like to showcase their talents and product, and superintendents are perfect examples of such people.

This pride in product also carries over to the various clubhouse and professional staffs at each club. Please support your local meetings because you are also showing support and appreciation for your fellow superintendents.

Networking with your local turf managers and suppliers is the hidden and unadvertised benefit of attending the local meetings. Exchanging war stories is a great learning experience and acts as an informal support group for those tough times. Those who question the value of the time spent at a local meeting need to consider the value of learning a new idea or solution to an old problem.

A meeting discussion or just a conversation during lunch or golf may provide an idea that saves your club hundreds or even thousands of dollars. Or maybe, it may be an idea that just makes the course and you look better. If you have a com-

plaint about a meeting, more than likely, everyone will benefit if you offer your help or suggestions to correct it.

Finally, don't forget about the new guy. People complain that not enough superintendents attend their own meetings. This is often true and I would venture to say that poor attendance is most chapters' biggest problem.

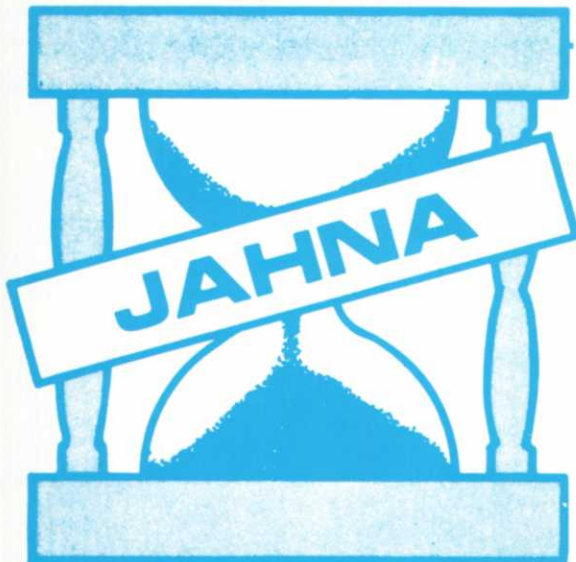
Bringing in new members and keeping them coming back until they feel comfortable is very important. If no one welcomes them to the group or talks to them, chances are they won't be back. Each and every member of a chapter is very important to the success of the whole association.

***The FTGA & GCSAA Conferences:
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The big conventions and trade shows offer the superintendent a side variety of educational and hand-on opportunities. The trade shows are huge often offering everything from computerized golf cart location devices and weather radar to turf equipment and uniforms.

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The education is just as diverse ranging from twenty minute research updates to two-day long seminars and field trips. The FTGA and GCSAA spend much time and money to secure top quality educational programs usually in exciting locations.



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These larger conventions usually have many university level speakers and researchers who disseminate the latest information from their current projects. These sessions are usually open to all conference attendees and are grouped by general topics like "southern turf management" or "public golf."

I like that these presentations are only twenty to sixty minutes long so you can see and hear a lot of information in a morning or afternoon session and even talk to the speaker. Since everyone attending these sessions is looking for answers to similar problems the possibility of discussion and idea exchange is very high.

The other type of education at these conferences is specific in-depth one or two-day seminars. These are usually very specific in nature. They are taught in a classroom setting by experts in that particular field. Many of these classes that I have attended are of college level quality.

There is usually a separate charge for these seminars, and in the case of the GCSAA Conference you had better make

your reservations early or they may be sold out.

You always receive supplemental printed matter and course syllabus that can be used for future reference.

Certified superintendents can earn continuing education credits by taking an examination at the end of the GCSAA classes.

Most conferences offer speakers who are motivational as in the case of GCSAA's opening night keynote speaker. Many of the speakers are not related directly to golf, but rather they deliver positive messages about overcoming obstacles, believing in yourself and being successful.

Their role is to get the convention off on a positive note.

The FTGA & GCSAA have done excellent jobs of getting top notch panels to discuss timely topics such as environmental relations and product comparisons.

The GCSAA has brought in national politicians, famous media personalities and top level environmentalist to sit on these various panels.

This year's Environmental General Session on February 8th looks very interesting.

Then there is the Trade Show. The show of shows. The perfect opportunity to see the latest in turf technology and sometimes non-turf technology. I have seen everything from electric triplex greensmowers to chairs with built-in back massagers.

There are two things you need to remember when attending a trade show.

First, wear comfortable shoes for the ten-mile walk you will take.

Second, remember that you are wearing a name tag and that salesman shaking our hand is not your long lost childhood friend but rather a professional at marketing who can read your name tag.

That's part of your education too!

Professionalism and Education

*by Mike Hamilton, CGCS
Grey Oaks Country Club*

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fect his or her skills. No one gets better at anything unless they are educated by some means, either by being taught in some fashion or through experience.

I am a very strong believer in the philosophy that most people have to be taught how to learn, and taught how to succeed.

If you ask the superintendents with the most prestigious jobs how they got to where they are, I would bet a very large percentage would tell you they had great teachers. The most noticeable characteristic of most all of these superintendents is that they themselves are great educators and they preach professionalism.

Our industry has grown tremendously in the past 50 years in both respect and compensation for the superintendent. The people in the industry most responsible for that growth have been those who are great educators and who act professionally. One problem we have as an industry is that the percentage of these leaders is not as high as it could be.

Can you imagine how much money all of us would make and how good our jobs would be if 100% of our superinten-

dents shared these same characteristics? I truly believe those characteristics can be taught to most people! Therefore, it is our responsibility to our profession to educate our people, especially the youth.

When I was in high school, I was not a joiner. Although I was involved in athletics, I was not involved in any clubs or other extra curricular activities.

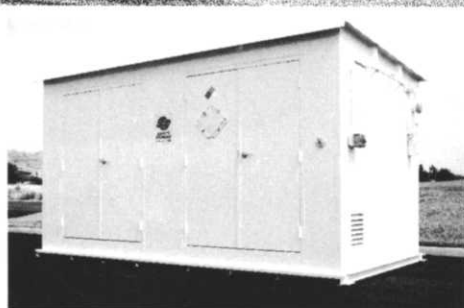
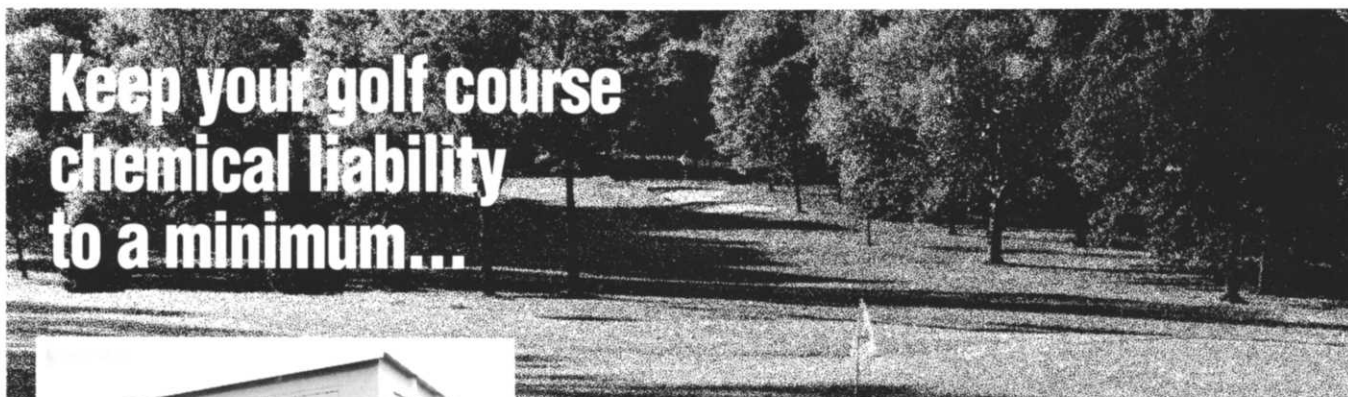
I was not into education. My grades bordered on failure. I was on the road to mediocrity. I believe the reason was because I was never taught how to succeed.

I started working on a golf course in my sophomore year in high school. When I began showing signs that I had an interest in the industry, the superintendent started taking me to meetings and teaching me as much as he could. He encouraged me to further my education with college, and he constantly preached to me about a professional image.

If it were not for that man, I would not be where I am today.

Because of the tutelage I received when I was young, and the fact that I was allowed to attend meetings, it has always been second nature for me to continually

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educate myself and my staff. I also feel it is my responsibility to get involved in helping to build our professional image.

Yes, it is a lot of extra work, but it is a payback to a profession that has rewarded me and my family tremendously. If I had not had that professionalism influence when I was young, I'm sure I would have fallen into my old natural pattern on not getting involved.

If any of my efforts have helped any association I was in, even in a small way, wouldn't have been a shame if I had never participated?

I start by letting the employee do every job on the golf course for a certain period of time. That period is dependent on how long they plan to be with me.

I let them spend a little more time on the specialty positions like spray tech, irrigation tech, service tech and administrative assistant. I even let them act as the assistant superintendent for a week.

During the time they are with me, I require them to read turfgrass books and take tests on the materials they read. I take the technical information and relate

it to the practical applications on the course.

I also let them attend at least one superintendent's meeting while they are with me. After that meeting while the experience is fresh in their minds, they get my involvement and professionalism speech. In the last few weeks of training, I help them prepare a resume.

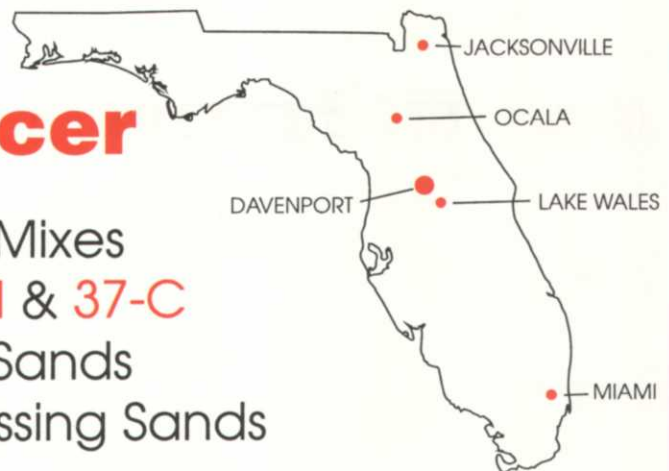
I then interview them. If the person does not interview well, I make suggestions and interview them again and again if necessary. After I feel they interview well, I will then negotiate with them. Again I do it until I feel they have learned good negotiating skills. The final process is for the students to critique the training program, so I can see where improvements can be made.

Many of you may think this kind of a training program is too much work or a waste of time. I don't. I have seen some very positive results. I believe that if I can help one person the way I was helped, and they become a fellow crusader to raise our professional standards, then the time I spent was well worth it!

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