

It is with great pleasure that I will serve as your president for the next year. It has been more than 23 years or so that this transplanted cheese head has been “turfin it” in South Florida. Along this lengthy journey, many wonderful people have touched my career and life, helping to shape the person I am today.

A few folks deserve mention and thanks such as Jim Walker. He provided me with my first text on bermudagrass way back in 1981. There was Alan Wietzel – showing me the ropes in the early years, especially South Florida association tidbits and

advice. Then there was Dr. Max Brown, who took a chance on me as superintendent of his home course at Ft. Lauderdale Country Club. Thanks to him for all the support, patience and encouragement he bestowed on me, especially during the early years of superintendent-hood.

A special thanks also goes out to David Court for asking me to serve on the board at the state level. Watching and learning from him over the past few years at the board level has been a very wonderful experience. I only hope that a few morsels of his wisdom has rubbed off over the years, and I hope to make him proud this year and on into the future.

Before discussing our goals for the year, I would be remiss if I did not extend our best wishes to those affected by all the hurricanes this season. No region was totally spared, but the Calusa, Treasure Coast and Ridge Chapters took the hardest hits from storm landfall fury and multiple hits in the central parts of the state as the eyes of Charley, Frances and Jeanne all passed through Polk County. We know that strong bonds have been formed during the recovery, whether it has been with family, neighbors, friends, staff and/or members at your club.

Hopefully, your club members will understand the damage not only at your courses but homes as well and will be patient as you put the pieces back together.

During Hurricane Andrew in 1992, we saw what being without power and proper shelter can do to your life, let alone the vast damage to our treescape and the like. It was kind of awesome, though, to see how the teamwork, determination and ingenuity helped us rise from such adversity. As time passes and wounds heal, we want to hear your stories. I am sure there are some wonderful encounters and experiences that have and will take place during the rebuilding process.

When the gavel was passed my way at the annual meeting in August, I told the board how excited I was about this upcoming year. What a wonderful opportunity to meet new people, learn new ideas, travel a bit, hopefully make an impact on our industry and set the table for success in the future. The turf industry

is worth fighting for — it's a \$4.4 billion business here in Florida (wow!). While we have come a long way as an industry, there is so much more to do to get to where we deserve to be.

We have seen a disturbing trend over the past couple of years in that our membership has not increased and participation at functions has diminished somewhat. As a result, Greg Pheneger, your immediate past president, helped develop a member-needs survey which was distributed to each of the 12 chapters asking for their feedback on concerns, ideas and suggestions. When all the data was compiled, it became fairly easy for me to select a set of goals for the year: ones you as members see as a priority.

We decided to keep it simple by selecting only a few important initiatives that we could complete within one year. There are only four, which may seem straightforward at first glance, but are actually very complicated and involve a multitude of committee interactions, staff involvement and industry related efforts to realize.

FGCSA Objectives for 2004-2005

- Increase turf research funding.
- Improve communication/coordination throughout chapters, GCSAA and allied associations,
- Improve and coordinate educational opportunities throughout the state.
- Ensure that our association is functioning efficiently and is directed appropriately to the future.

Not only are these goals ones that you requested, but they are also a great way to strengthen our foothold in the turf/golf business in Florida. In future publications, we will expand on these goals and how they will be accomplished. Meanwhile, our numerous committees will be working hard on these objectives. As members, I also look forward to some of your fresh ideas.

Coincidentally, the GCSAA has asked our chapters to be a prototype contributor in a “Chapter Assessment Tool.” Each chapter, as well as the state association, was asked some tough questions as to how we operate, what services we provide to members, our leadership, promotional development, etc. This was a lengthy and thorough exercise to complete but one that eerily paralleled our own goals well as a state organization. We will select some of the findings from this assessment and further enhance our initiatives for the turf industry.

My friends here in South Florida know me as a competitor, a good listener, one who asks way too many questions and follows up well on details; but all for a purpose – to learn and grow. As president, I am eager to help make us better as an organization. I look forward to leading this outstanding team of professionals and know we will accomplish great things. As I recently told our board, feel free to call on me anytime if I can be of assistance in our mission.

*Joe Pantaleo,
FGCSA President*

Opportunities and Challenges

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Joe Pantaleo

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