

Serving on a GCSAA Committee

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Ever thought of serving on a GCSAA committee? What does it take and how do you go about being picked to serve on one?

Over the past 10 years I've served on several: Publications, Strategic Communications and Chapter Relations. I'll try to answer those questions and give a little insight into how the GCSAA operates.

I serve because I belong to the organization and firmly believe that sometimes you've got to give something back to that organization. I grew up in the 1960s believing you are either part of the problem or part of the solution. When you join an organization you become part of it; and if things aren't exactly how you want them, you work for change.

I volunteered to edit our local association newsletter in 1995 when the position became open. I had the interest, the skills and a desire to see the job done well. As a consequence I have been a board member for more than 10 years and learned how to edit and manage a publication. I felt my opinion on the running of our association mattered. I've met and got to know a lot of really good people too.

One day it dawned on me that I could possibly influence our profession on the national level. Every year since I joined GCSAA, I saw the invitation to volunteer to serve on a committee. "Why not?" I thought. "I'm probably qualified. I'm involved at the local level and I'm not afraid to express myself. I am willing to serve. What more could they want in a committee member?"

I volunteered one fall and, after GCSAA checked with our local chapter, I was called that winter to serve. I understand now that it can take up to three years to get on a specific committee, but I had lucked out. I thought I might be in over my head, but I knew my reasons for wanting to serve

were valid. I decided to take my place on the committee.

When you are picked to serve on a committee, you are invited by a member of the GCSAA staff who calls on behalf of the committee chairperson, which is usually a board member. Editor-in-Chief Ed Hiscock called me and outlined the responsibilities of serving on the Publications Committee and all my questions.

The first thing he wanted to know was, could I make a meeting in May of that year? I would need to fly in the night before and there would be a day and a half of meetings. After lunch on the second day we would return home. Simple enough. I could do that.

GCSAA takes care of all expenses for attending the meeting. You call GCSAA Travel and book a flight and the staff takes care of arranging your local transportation, a room and meals. All they ask is you show up and participate.

When traveling to GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence, Kan. you fly into Kansas City, Mo. Lawrence is about an hour's drive west of Kansas City. They will arrange for you to rent a car or share a limousine ride. I've done both over the years.

One of the best parts of committee service is that you meet a lot of people in the business you probably would never have met otherwise. The committee is picked to represent the diversity of our membership. There are people from all regions of the country and from all types of facilities. There are directors of golf and superintendents of public nine-hole courses. They are all superintendents in the broadest sense of the word and all are trying to help our association in their own ways. Besides superintendents on the committee, I have met people from the USGA, chapter executives and other industry advisers with special skills.

Accommodations while in Lawrence are good. We stay at hotels usually within walking distance of downtown Lawrence, which is a great college town

(Kansas University) with rolling hills in an otherwise flat landscape. Spring can be a stormy time in Kansas, so tornado warnings are not unusual late in the afternoon and early evening. Take that as a travel tip when booking your flight. On the night of your arrival an optional dinner is scheduled. This is social time to meet and greet your fellow committee members, who can be old and new friends.

In the morning, a staff member meets you in the lobby and makes sure everyone has a ride to headquarters. The first time you see the building, it can be quite a sight sitting on a hilltop in west Lawrence. I had been in the industry for 20 years and GCSAA was an organization I belonged to, but it was still an abstraction. The building is quite a "concrete" reality and impressive. Even more impressive is when you take a tour of the building and see all the departments and all the people working hard every day to serve our needs.

The committee meetings start early each day and the first day goes a full eight hours with brief breaks and lunch on site. Staff members come in and out and the ambitious agenda is dutifully followed. There are state-of-the-association presentations and then presentations and discussions on committee business leading to decisions and recommendations for action to the board of directors.

The people you met the night before in a casual atmosphere become very real as you learn what is and isn't important to them. You come to respect them not just for their insights and opinions but for their commitment to serve. The GCSAA staff clearly sees its purpose as serving members. Their attention to detail and nuance is awesome. At each meeting I have attended, our CEO Steve Mona discusses the state of the association and how your committee fits into its mission and goals. He also checks in on the committee at breaks or lunch and at the wrap-up session

to make sure all has gone well and to meet individual members.

After the first day of meetings, I am usually exhausted. I have thought and spoken so much more than I usually do in one day. After a brief break at the end of the day, you are off to the official committee dinner at a local restaurant where discussion of the day's events mingle with talk of golf courses, careers, hobbies and home life. You drift off to sleep early knowing that the car leaves for headquarters again early in the morning and you will need to be packed and checked out first.

The first meeting on the second morning recaps the discussions of the first day with an emphasis on those that may involve policy changes. Then you move on to new matters. By the time you pick up your box lunch and head for the airport you are invigorated but on the brink of exhaustion. I'm glad I have that flight home to take a nap.

Serving on a GCSAA committee is rewarding. I have seen policies adopted and changed due to the input from committees I have served on that is studied and considered by the board of directors. It is a serious commitment that entails taking time away from work for a couple of days to serve your profession. It also means keeping in contact during the year by emails with staff and other members when input is needed.

It is a commitment to our profession, but as I stated in the beginning – sometimes you've got to give something back.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: I met Bob while serving on the Publications Committee and he has reprinted several Florida Green articles in his newsletter. If you can't get on a national committee right away, your local chapter can use some help, and your service will improve your chances for a spot on a GCSAA committee.



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