



The Central Florida TESTA organizes an annual shop tour so area mechanics can network and see different operations. Photo by Joel Jackson.

## Make Opportunities Available for Vital Staff Training, Education

“You cannot teach what you do not know. You cannot go where you cannot lead.”

This was a comment by Andy Ragsdale during research for the cover story for this issue. I thought it fit perfectly with the Hands On theme.

While it is vital for superintendents to be up to date on regulations and turf management technology and equipment, it is clear that communication, business and leadership education are also key components for a successful career and operation.

Superintendents can attend GCSAA, FTGA, commercial and local chapter education programs, but what are courses doing to train the staff that is also critical for the success of the facility?”

Many courses send their assistants, technicians and/or foremen to the FTGA Regional Seminars in January. Several TESTA (Turf Equipment Service Technicians Association) chapters offer training sessions for certification in several maintenance areas.

Requiring pest control technicians to become certified Pest Control Operators is another way to improve their knowledge and environmental awareness.

Perhaps the best way a superintendent can improve performance and training of their assistants is to have

them join the local FGCSA chapters and give them the opportunity to attend several meetings each year.

Here are thoughts of some FGCSA members on job training, health and safety topics:

### SEVEN RIVERS UF/IFAS PLANT SCIENCE CENTER

We have quarterly safety meetings throughout the year with the entire staff. Topics include pesticide safety, heat stress, equipment safety, etc. We do most of the training in-house but have brought in individuals from outside the organization such as Lee Bloomcamp and Chris Pappas.

We have had unusual training sessions for forklift operation, proper lifting, and passenger bus operation (*I bet no one else has that last one*).

The University’s policy on pesticides is more strict than the state’s policy. Almost everyone on the staff has a pesticide license and therefore needs opportunities to earn CEU’s. We provide them with several opportunities to achieve those CEU’s.

We usually send everyone to attend Chris Pappas’s First Response Chemical Spill Training Course. We send two people every year for the week-long class for Site Commander Training for Chemical Spills.

We have conducted Fumigation

Training sessions over the last couple of years for the entire University which serve as a review for most and an opportunity for others to take the test and receive their license or earn CEU’s.

The Marion County Jail supplies trustees daily to work on the site. They watch the Workers Protection Video every day on the bus bringing them from the jail. We get a few new people every day, so we need to make sure that they all see it.

My turf crew attends the FTGA seminars every January. When I had a mechanic, I sent him to equipment technician seminars that were held around the state. The University offers computer training classes, which many of our staff have attended. We keep very detailed records of applications and inventory, so having computer skills is a big plus for many of the employees.

Mark G. Kann  
Coordinator of Research Programs

### CENTRAL FLORIDA MARRIOTT WORLD CENTER

We have numerous associates going through a certification program at this time for high-reach, forklift, and pallet-jack operating. The associates are required to have their certification with them whenever they’re operating any of that equipment.

We’re also all attending a safety seminar on hearing, which includes a hearing exam.

John Kopack  
Golf Course Superintendent

### TREASURE COAST HOBE SOUND GOLF CLUB

We have monthly general safety videos, with tests at the end, sent by Risk Compliance. We very rarely have a workman’s comp claim so I would say the videos do their job. When I review the video program with insurance adjusters, they are usually pretty impressed. We have been doing this for five or six years.

We also have a checklist for operators for everything from fairway mowers to string trimmers. This checklist was taken directly from the

## A Unique Workforce – and No Absenteeism

*Editor's Note: When Mark mentioned the inmates who worked at the Plant Science Center and the mandatory Worker Protection videos that they have to watch, I asked him for more information about the program.*

The inmates or "Trusties" that work at the UF/IFAS Plant Science Center come from the Marion County Jail. The sheriff believes that by working on the farm, they will learn some skills that they will be able to use when they get back out into the world. As of last word, six former trustees are now working on golf courses.

The farm gets about 25-30 inmates Monday-Thursday from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. I normally get 4-6 trustees each day to work in the turf area. I try to teach them to mow, but they need to be monitored rather closely at first. It's nice because I don't have to worry about them showing up, but I do have to worry about the quality of work that they do.

They get 8 days gain time off their sentence for each month that they work out here. They are all low-risk offenders, mostly DUI's, failure to pay child support, drug possession – no violent crimes. We do not pay to have the inmates come here, but we do send all of our leftover produce to the prison instead of trying to sell it and compete with local farmers that pay taxes and our salaries.

This past year, we sent over 350,000 pounds of potatoes to the prison. We will send other crops such as watermelon, tomatoes, peppers, carrots, cantaloupe, corn, eggplant, squash, etc. In addition, the sheriff has about 40 head of cattle that graze the prairie here. We can not use the area for experiments, so we let the cows graze there and they keep the weeds and grass down so that we do not have to mow it. We will bail hay for them and also feed them leftover field corn, soybeans, sorghum, and other silage crops.

*Mark Kann, Coordinator of Research Programs*

operators' manuals of the various pieces of equipment. We review important items from the manual and make the operators sign off on each piece of equipment.

I have two guys who have been with me for only three years. The rest of the staff have been here a minimum of six years, most of the them more than 10, so most of the crew know their jobs and safety requirements inside out.

My mechanic also goes to FTGA and GCSAA conferences when they're nearby and he is active in the local mechanic's association.

*Roy MacDonald*  
Golf Course Superintendent

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We use a wide variety of training methods.

Internal Training: One-on-one training with manager or experienced crewmember, using the SVW videos and staff meetings. We also have

safety training with our personnel management group, daily supervision of operators including guidance and advice. We also have hired a supplier's technical rep to come in and teach a class.

External Training: Staff members attend UF/IFAS Extension classes and manufacturers' seminars. The club reimburses employees for tuition for college classes, and registrations for FTGA and GCSAA conferences and shows and also monthly Calusa GCSA meetings.

My current assistant is planning to retire next spring. I have an irrigation tech who is an excellent candidate for advancement and is interested in becoming a superintendent. We are paying his tuition for the turf program at Edison College so that he will be well-trained to assume the assistant's position in the spring.

*Nancy Miller*  
Golf Course & Grounds  
Superintendent

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