

Spencer has taken additional steps to show his concern for the environment, which the community has applauded. Three years ago, he formed a partnership with Ducks Unlimited to establish a wood duck colony on the course, which helps attract the birds and allows his crew to manage the population. He also maintains a chemical building on his property that houses a 1,000-gallon storage tank for recycling chemicals.

Fred Gehrish, superintendent for Highlands Fall Country Club in Highlands, N.C., holds educational forums for residents living on or near his course to explain what his crew is spraying and why. He also writes a regular column for his local newspaper that addresses course issues such as the scientific benefits of safely controlling disease and invasive plants on his course.

Gehrish also is involved in a study under way by the University of

### Tips for Communicating with Your Community

- 1) **Know your topic** and know it well. Be willing to give research to back up what you are saying.
- 2) **Do not lie.** A lot of the information you share is a matter of common sense; however, your audiences will fact check.
- 3) **Be as consistent** as you can. Some information will change over the course of time, but the majority of it should remain constant.
- 4) **Be patient.** It is important to remember that members of the community are not as versed on the subject matter as you are.
- 5) **Provide resources** where people can obtain additional information. Encourage them to spend some time learning about the issues they care about.

- Todd Burkdoll

Missouri on salamanders at 10 courses in the area – including his – to see how they are affected by chemical use. Along with the university, he regularly works with environmental groups, whether it is coordinating joint speaking engagements or donating his staff to support a local event.

Gehrish says most people he speaks with are relieved once they learn the chemicals he uses are similar to

everyday household products.

“I have found that using common medications as examples is the most effective way to demonstrate why they do not need to fear the products we use,” Gehrish said. “I read a list of side effects and lead them to believe it is a chemical I am using to treat turf disease when, in reality, it is aspirin.”

Communicating with the public falls under the many day-to-day

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responsibilities of a superintendent, and more of them are taking it upon themselves to go above and beyond that duty. At a minimum, superintendents should be able to confidently explain the parallels between plant and human disease, and how science helps alleviate damage in both cases.

“We talk a lot within our inner circle about what needs to be done, but as an industry, we tend to be slower in responding to the public than we should,” Gehrisch said. “For any change to happen, supers need to leave their desks and get out in front of their communities.”

Despite the fact that pesticides are useful tools that can provide significant benefits to our communities, the debate over whether to use them will undoubtedly continue. By basing communications on science instead of emotion, superintendents can help community members appreciate the time, labor and money-saving benefits of environmentally sound chemicals.

*EDITOR’S NOTE: In keeping with the communications theme of this issue, our friends at BASF shared this article which provides some ideas on the topic of pesticide use.*

## **Bag Tags Spread The Good Word About Golf**

### **Project EverGreen and GCBAA Announce Educational Outreach Program**

Project EverGreen is teaming with Golf Course Builders Association of America Foundation’s Sticks for Kids program and its partner the National Recreation and Park Association to give more than 60,000 children helpful information about the environmental benefits of golf courses. Sticks for Kids provides young people with their first golf experience and promotes the life values of the sport. Through the partnership, Project EverGreen and Sticks for Kids will provide golf club bag tags to 407 courses the first year.

The two versions of the bag tags read:

- Go hug that tree you just hit. The shade it’s creating is trying to keep you cool out here.

- Nice divot. Now go fix it. That grass you’re tearing up cleans the air so you can breathe a little easier.

“This humorous approach is a great way to give kids ages 5-15 the big picture about how important golf courses are to the environment and to them personally,” says Den Gardner, executive director of Project EverGreen.

“Our partnership with Sticks for Kids is just one small part of our larger efforts to educate and inform people of all ages about the environmental, economic and lifestyle benefits of green spaces.”

Golf clubs and marketing funds for the Sticks for Kids programs are provided by the GCBAA Foundation in conjunction with its partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association. Sticks for Kids will grow to more than 400 programs in 2009 and cover all 50 states in 2009.

“Promotion of the environmental advantages of green spaces is very important to our members,” GCBAA Executive Director Paul Foley said. “We appreciate the opportunity to work with Project EverGreen to get this message out to the youth that represent the future of our sport.”

Project EverGreen is a national nonprofit service organization representing service providers, associations, suppliers/distributors, media companies, and others affiliated with the green industry. Project EverGreen’s mission is to preserve and enhance green space in our communities for today and future generations. To learn more about Project EverGreen visit [www.projectevergreen.com](http://www.projectevergreen.com) or call 877-758-4835. The Golf Course Builders Association of America is a nonprofit trade association of the world’s foremost golf course builders and leading suppliers to the golf course construction industry. It was founded in the early 1970s and its members represent all segments of the golf course



industry. The GCBAA Foundation is the charitable arm of the GCBAA and a separate, 501(c)(3) organization. The GCBAA’s national executive office is located in Lincoln, Neb. For more information, visit [www.gcbaa.org](http://www.gcbaa.org) or call 402-476-4444

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*– Current John Deere Customer*

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*– Current Toro Customer*

*"Much better than our current walking greens mower. I like the simplicity of the reel and traction drives."*

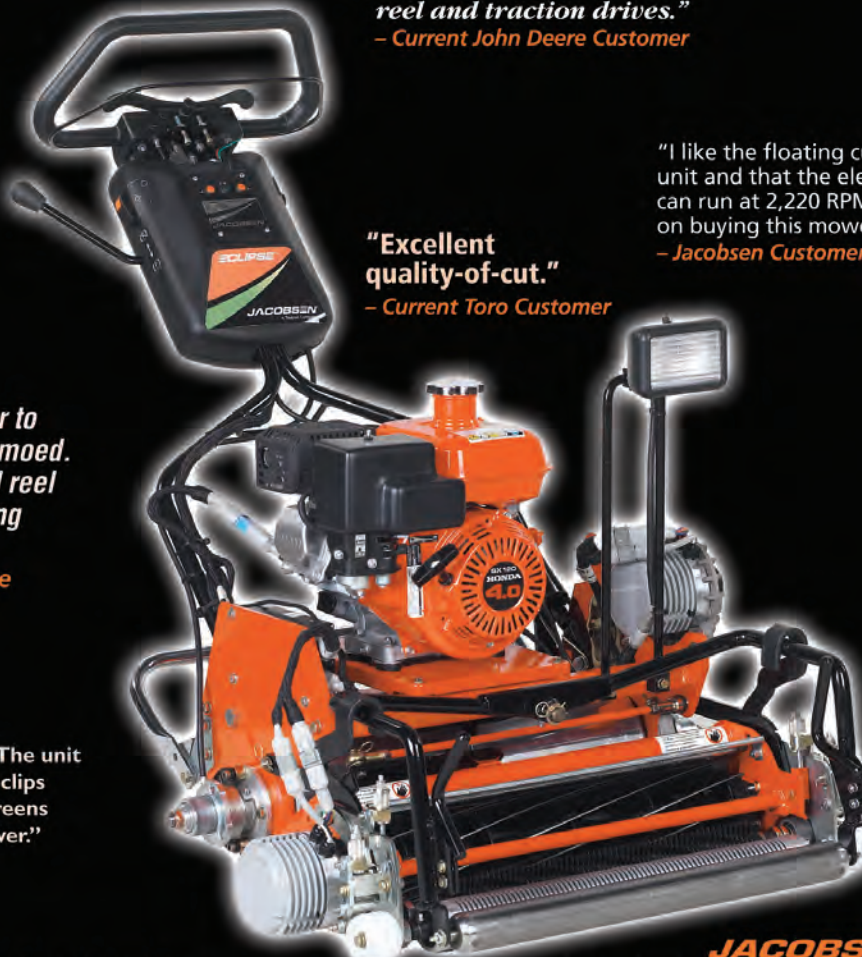
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A spring bird count outing at The Sanctuary Golf Club on Sanibel Island. Photo by Kyle Sweet.

## Reach out and Educate

### How Audubon International's 'Outreach & Education certification Can Work for You

By Kyle D. Sweet, CGCS

Over the past 15 years, Audubon International's Sanctuary Golf Course Program has grown to include 90 certified golf courses in the state of Florida and a total of 669 certified golf courses worldwide. This increasing popularity has made the word "Audubon" as recognizable in our industry as verti-cutting and topdressing. The increased awareness has gone beyond our offices and maintenance facilities to clubhouses and golf shops.

This means one thing – our golfers know about it too. They know about it from their own club, playing the club across town or maybe a friend's club locally or far away. Is this important to us, our industry and Audubon? The answer is yes.

The six special categories required for certification status help to create a well-rounded, environmentally-sound operation for the participating golf course. Most of the certification sections are topics that we are trained in and are the core essentials of our jobs.

Pesticide Use Reduction, Water Conservation and Water Quality Management are a few section examples that we deal with each and every day.

Obviously, every course is different and each property has its own strengths and challenges when beginning the Audubon Certification process. One section, however – Outreach and Education – may bring about a new adventure in your position as superintendent and you're the one who can steer this part of certification to success. Outreach and Education, two words that may strike fear into many superintendents, can be the highlight of your Audubon Program involvement.

Here are a few tips that I hope help. They have worked for us for the past several years.

#### Joining Audubon International and creating a committee:

Mailing in your membership fee is a great start, but doesn't get you anywhere if you don't get active. If you're a member, forming a committee to work alongside you is a big step in moving down the road to certification. The committee makeup will vary from club to club, but should include at least you, a club representative (member/owner), your golf professional and possibly an outside volunteer. This volunteer could be a biologist, birder, land manager or the like. The goal

of the committee should be to work together, utilizing individual strengths for the common goal of the program. Meet as often as you need to get the job done. This committee begins your outreach to your club and community.

**Schedule activities where members, residents or golfers can join in:** These don't have to be complicated and, when beginning, the easier the better. Include the dates for the activities in your club's newsletter, post at your golfer entrance and put a bright reminder in the golf shop. Place anywhere that you can get maximum exposure to your target group. Some activity ideas include:

**Native Plant Tour:** This tour can take place throughout your course. You know the plants; just share your knowledge with your group. You may have an area expert with your city or county nearby who may be willing to volunteer and co-host the tour. A co-host with additional plant knowledge can be a big help. Following up with a photo recap of your tour with plant identification and a "thanks for touring" letter goes a long way.

**Maintenance Facility Open House:** If you've been wanting to clean up the shop, schedule one of these tours for your members or golfers. You will look at your shop in a different light when you know guests are coming through the facility. Create scheduled stops, know what you will say and have your assistant, equipment manager, IPM manager and irrigation manager present their respective areas. Highlight your environmental stewardship with your fuel station, mix/load containment area, equipment wash water recycling and equipment repair facilities. They will be impressed and many will be surprised at your level of expertise off of the course.

**Spring Bird Count:** We know plants and insects, because it's what we do. Now, expand that knowledge of your property to the birds. Birding takes practice and interest and I bet you would be surprised how many birders are out there on your course. Hold a bird count for your club each year and have a sign-up for participants. A six-seater cart is handy to haul the

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– Jeff Taylor, Golf Course Superintendent  
Boca Pointe Country Club



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group around. Contact an area birder who can help with the count and with identification. Many county extension offices have contacts who would probably welcome the opportunity to birdwatch on your course. Their expertise can be the key to success with this and you'll learn more as well.

**Wildlife Tour:** You know your property and the wildlife it contains. Bring a out a group to search the property for these animals and their habitats. A better understanding of the animals will help to protect them, especially if they are a threatened species such as the gopher tortoise. Passing along your wildlife knowledge to others at your course is an eye-opening experience for them and reinforces your position of a professional environmentally conscious superintendent.

In addition to your hosted tour of the course in search of wildlife, your golfers may want to let you know what

they see out there. It's simple to post a wildlife sighting sheet in the pro shop, locker room or other area at your course. The date, what they saw, where they saw it and how many are data items for the sheet. This information may prove very valuable with your Audubon wildlife inventory and increase your golfer interest.

**Announce your accomplishments**

If you do any or all of these activities, publicize your accomplishments. Club newsletters, websites and postings for golfer/members are all great outlets for announcing your accomplishments. Group photos, bird count results and the opportunity to get your golfers more involved can go a long way. Your local newspaper is interested about your successful environmental efforts as well. When you become certified in each respective category, announce that achievement. And when the process

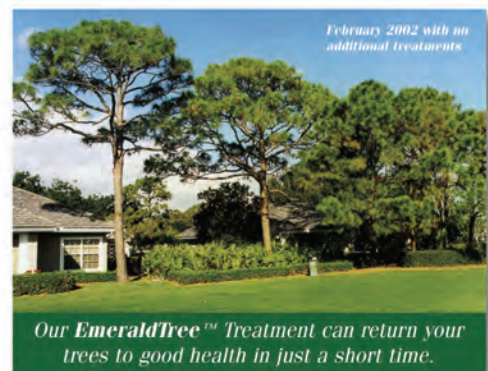
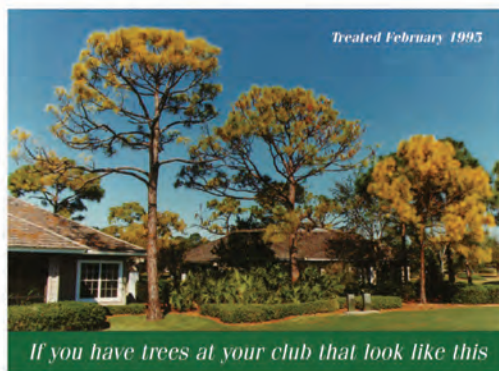
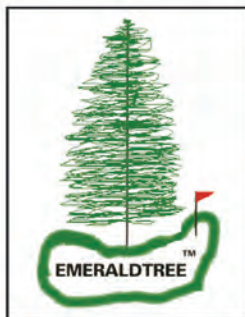
is completed wrap it up in one big press release. Audubon International is pleased to help with formatting the press releases.

**Create a Brochure**

A brochure of your course wildlife can be a great tool for Outreach and Education. This brochure can be customized to your specific site and can be updated as often as you need to keep current. Copies of the brochure can be mailed to your members, handed to your golfers, and distributed throughout the housing community surrounding your course. You are getting out the word about the wildlife at your club, which is important awareness for everyone.

Outreach and Education can be a terrific satisfying part of your Audubon Program. Invest some time, get creative and make this a fun, educational opportunity for you, your golfers, your staff and the community.

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# Signs *Basic Communication Tools*

Using signs as educational tools is an effective way to communicate environmental messages to your golfers. Let's face it, very few superintendents have day-to-day contact with most of the golfers who play their courses. Opportunities to educate golfers are few and far between. Follow the lead of some Florida golf courses, and let signs help you send an environmental message. — Shelly Foy



*Demonstrate your proactivity and inspire others to care for the environment.*



*Let golfers know that your course is participating in an environmental program and committed to environmental stewardship.*

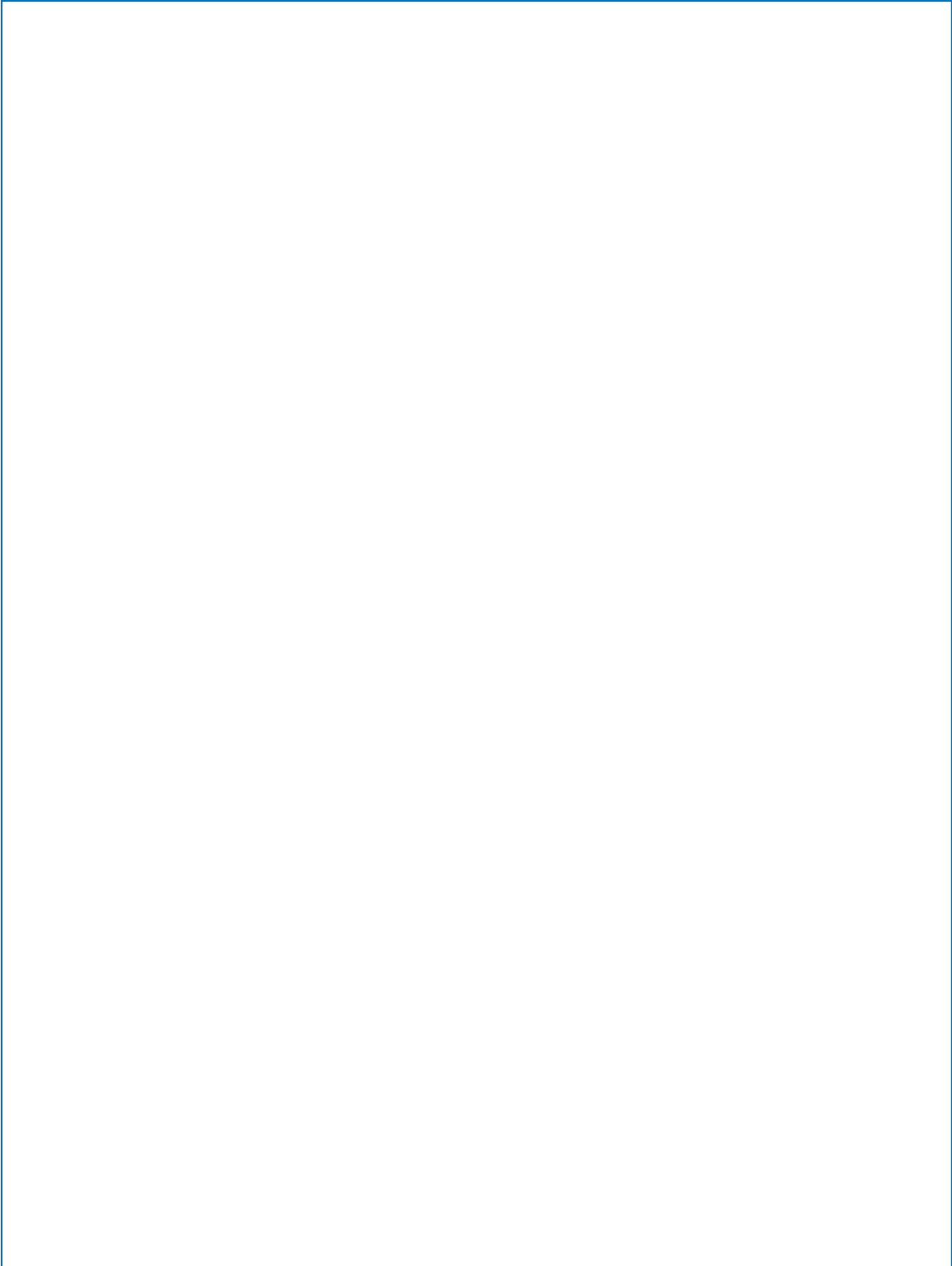
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**GREEN SIDE UP  
BY JOEL JACKSON**

First, greetings to one and all and our wishes for a Happy New Year as we welcome in 2009. While we certainly have legitimate concerns over how the economy will play out in the coming months, it will be interesting to see if we witness the 21st century's version of the New Deal Era of the Roosevelt years.

Belt tightening and budget cuts are a given, but show me a solid superintendent and I'll show you an expert at adaptation and survival. There will be unforeseen ripples across our industry, our association and our chapters as we all

adjust. But in tough times superintendents have always been masters at doing more with less.

During times of adversity, people of action with character and leadership and communication skills will be looked up to. Be one of those types of people and your chances of survival will be maximized. Embrace change as it will be coming, and use change to make improvements in your operations. No time for doing it the same old way.

With tighter budgets, I can foresee a dip in attendance and participation at many of our events – nationally and locally. It is important now more than ever that everyone doesn't just go to ground and hole up for the next year or so.

It may be time to cut back a little, but you should still go to as many meetings as you can and even pick up some of the cost if that's what it takes. It's time for clubs to welcome superintendent meetings and outings at rates that generate a modest profit so the superintendent's education and problem-solving networking can continue for the good of all golf courses.

It's also a time to be

very thankful for those individuals, companies and golf courses that have always been there for us. I fully expect many of them may have to scale back on their time and support, but we are all in this together, so we shouldn't just shut down, but rather keep moving forward with a new viewpoint on what's most important and cost effective.

Do we really need to buy more "stuff" for people to win at our fundraisers? How many DVD players and TVs do people need?

I'm sure they didn't sign up just to play for prizes, but rather to support the cause like charity or research. So maybe we could re-evaluate those expenses and return more to the bottom line for donations.

I don't mean to sound like a kill-joy or scrooge; we just need to look at our own operations and associations to see how we can maximize our effectiveness during this recession.

On a more upbeat note, I'm pleased to report that the new magazine format without the gatefold cover and a change in paper weight resulted in significant production cost savings. The

resulting lighter weight of the issue also resulted in lower postage and handling costs even though we had a postal rate increase at the same time.

Thanks to Secretary/Treasurer Gary Myers, CGCS's employee discount, we have been able to move our board meetings traditionally scheduled in Orlando to Walt Disney World venues at a substantial saving from previous locations. That's just another way we are making changes to keep costs down as we go about the business of the association.

And out on main street, the FTGA launched nine regional seminars around the state in January. We don't know the attendance figures since our deadline is before the seminars will be held. The point is that the core principles of member service and continuing education are still in place and functioning.

According to the calendar in the Spotlight section, it appears that most chapters plan on having a full slate of the traditional meetings and events in 2009. So it's good we will have some sense of normalcy as we cinch up our belts and head into the new year. Good luck, everyone.

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