

## Florida's First Coast

Continued from page 40

outs in the tri-county area. The extensive list of hoteliers includes the Ritz Carlton, Marriott, Embassy Suites and Holiday Inn.

"You need enough courses so that a group of friends can come down for a week, play 36 holes a day and never play the same course twice," the executive director said. "And you need to have enough empty hotel rooms that you can offer people a great deal.

"We're competing with areas like Myrtle Beach. When people read a brochure from that area and then one of ours, one of the first things they look at is price.

"If an area is already pretty well booked and just looking to make some additional revenue, the regional concept won't work. It only works if you can offer significant discounts."

Once they realized they had the raw resources, course and hotel operators along with members of the local chambers of commerce and visitors bureaus ventured up to Myrtle Beach to discover how that 27-year success story worked.

Convinced it could also work for the First Coast — so named because it is the first coastal area one hits driving into Florida and because of first-city-in-the-nation St. Augustine— they began seeking a director.

That fall they chose Callaghan, a former University of Alabama sports information director and Gator Bowl organizer. Callaghan received a \$215,000 budget, half funded by the state's Tourist Development Council and the other half by local golf courses and hotels.

Approximately \$78,000 of that first-year budget went toward publishing 100,000 copies of a glossy, 48-page, 8-1/2-by-11-inch brochure detailing the First Coast's places to play and stay.

Rates range from as low as \$41 per person for accommodations, 18 holes of golf daily chosen from among 21 courses, complimentary breakfast and airport transportation, up to \$170 a night for Amelia Island Plantation and its many amenities.

With materials and booth in tow, Callaghan hit the road. The new director exhibited at 10 regional golf shows. He talked up the First Coast to potential golf vacationers and passed out an average 3,000 brochures at Toronto, Minneapolis, Detroit and other cities.

Booth visitors were invited to enter a drawing for an all-expenses-paid vacation to the First Coast. The names became a mailing list Callaghan used in targeting future materials. Callaghan purchased additional mailing lists from *Golf Digest* and *GOLF* magazines as well as limited advertising in some regional travel directories.

The second brochure came out this spring at a cost of \$81,000 for 125,000 copies. Callaghan plans to hit everyone on his lists at an

average mailing cost of 44 to 55 cents apiece.

"It may take two, three or more times seeing your information before potential vacationers consider your area," Callaghan said. "Many golfers are traditionalists and are hesitant to risk change. But people also like to see different places on their vacations."

Although the program operates on a year-to-year basis, Callaghan said organizers intend to see it through for the three to five years needed to determine whether it is a success.

"We couldn't do this without the support of the visitors bureaus

and chambers of commerce," Callaghan said. "They've provided us with free office space, computers and furniture.

"In addition to salaries and the brochures, we've just been responsible for phones, office supplies and mailings."

After 19 months as the only employee, Callaghan hired a secretary in early June.

"When I've been out of the office, all we've had is an answering machine to field calls," Callaghan said. "It should help to have someone who can respond personally to inquiries and send out information immediately."

## Kemper gives city courses a face lift

CHICAGO, Ill. — Park District golf courses here are getting a face lift. Beginning last June, asphalt tees and walks were replaced with natural grass and stone walking paths.

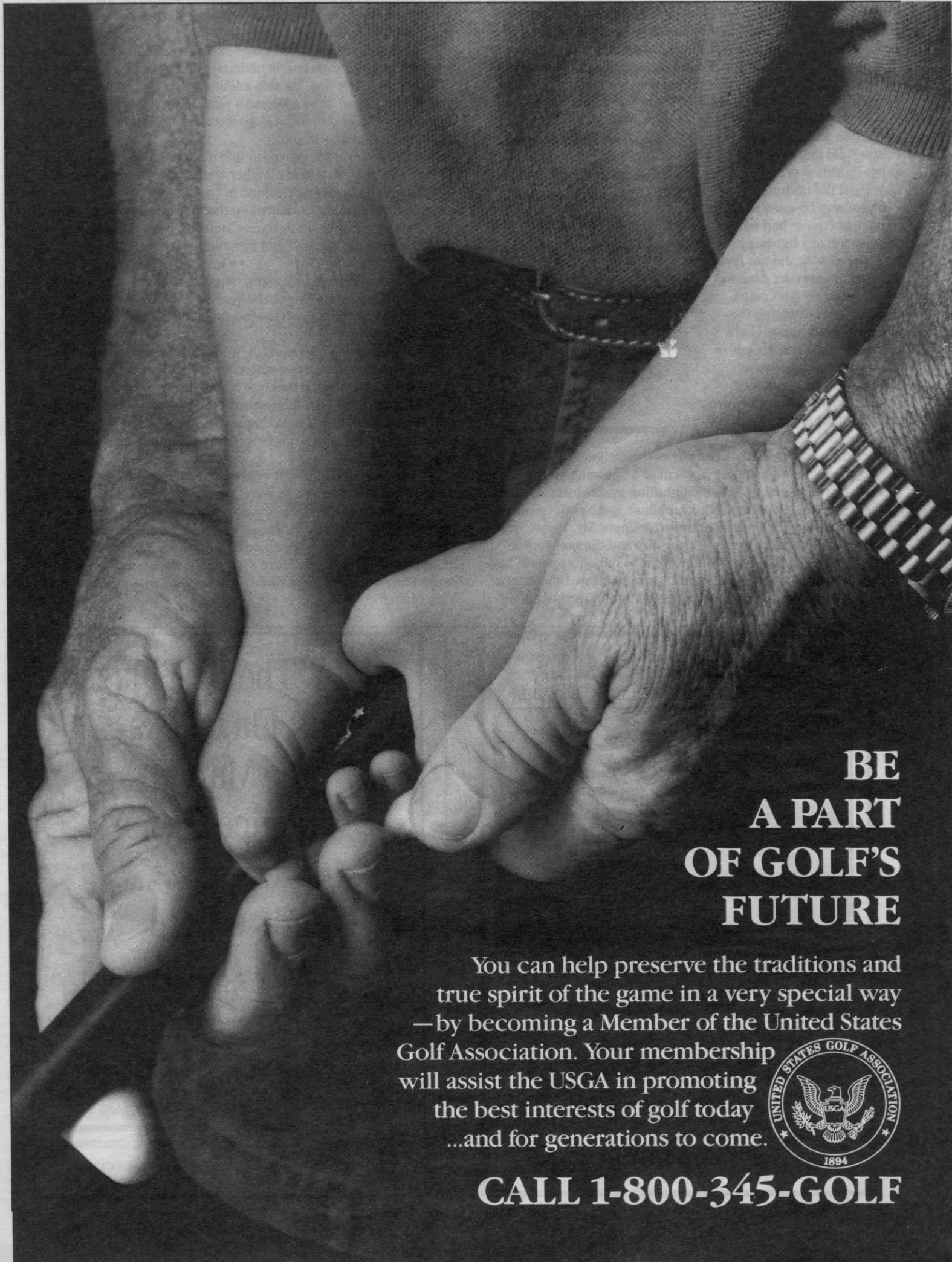
To date, Kemper Golf Management Chicago, Inc. (KGMC) has planted more than 175 trees and shrubs, 35 flower gardens and 2,000 yards of grass.

It has used more than 50 truck loads of soil, 15 ship-

ments of wood chips and cleaned more than 100 sandtraps in an effort to create a more positive impression.

The renovations also include added target greens at the Diversey range and a learning center at Jackson Park.

Last year the KGMC also installed a tee-time reservation system, which allows golfers to make reservations by phone using their credit card and social security number.



**BE  
A PART  
OF GOLF'S  
FUTURE**

You can help preserve the traditions and true spirit of the game in a very special way — by becoming a Member of the United States Golf Association. Your membership will assist the USGA in promoting the best interests of golf today ...and for generations to come.



**CALL 1-800-345-GOLF**