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VOLUNTEER SEARCH

Q How should I ask for volunteer assistance during the weeks leading up to and the week of a professional tournament I host?

A Begin with your local and state golf course superintendent chapter meetings years before the tournament. Take advantage of the talent to announce when the event is coming and present a detailed outline of what will occur and the volunteer requirements. Use your association's Web site to place a want ad. Provide accessible response information, such as phone numbers and e-mail addresses for you, the club and the professional staff. Speak at universities in your state that have a turfgrass or PGM program where students are looking to add to their experience or serve as interns for longer periods of time. This is a great forum to promote the event and the educational aspects of serving as a volunteer.

Q What can be done to increase volunteer interest and response?

A A personal and succinct letter addressed to your fellow superintendents and golf enthusiasts outlining when, where, what and how they and their staff members can assist you is the first step to generate interest. Include what event is coming, who is conducting the championship, when it's occurring, and reinforce that you and your staff are excited about hosting the event. State how many volunteers you wish to have to supplement the current staff, the work to be accomplished, the training required for an efficient operation and how long their volunteer commitment will be.

Q How do I organize responses so I can assign and schedule tasks and contact volunteers with necessary information?

A Enclose a volunteer application form with your invitation that includes space for the following information:

- Personal information such as name, address, home, work and cell phone numbers.
- Age of the volunteer.
- Copy of a valid driver's license.
- Verify the physical ability to perform golf course maintenance functions.
- Areas of expertise, such as mowing greens, tees, fairways and collars; hand-raking bunkers; and syringing fairways, tees and greens.
- If a uniform is to be provided, request shirt and hat sizes for men or women.
- For longer assignments, determine if the volunteer requires housing or not.
- A signature of the applicant to acknowledge he understands the volunteer position isn't guaranteed, or if it is, for what length of time.

Q What type of service other than turf maintenance is needed?

A The following are examples of nonturf-related items that need attention:

- Creating job descriptions, organizing contingency crews, and monitoring daily volunteer check-in and check-out procedures.
- Assistance with specific on-course job training and supervising of certain group tasks.
- Providing a security system to hold and protect the volunteer's personal effects so they're not lost during preparation work on the golf course.
- Operating the transportation system to shuttle volunteers to and from their hotels and designated parking areas, bringing in needed operational supplies, responding to mechanic's requests and running miscellaneous chores throughout the day.
- Ensuring all radios are accounted for, charged and distributed to the proper individuals.

Q What items or information are important to make the volunteer effort safe, fun and memorable?

A When you're putting together amenities for the volunteer package, consider the following:

- Catering for three meals a day plus fresh water and snacks at any time.
 - Proper accommodations that allow the volunteer to rest and relax so they're fresh for the next day's early arrival to the golf course.
 - On-site facilities so those who choose to stay have a quiet place to nap.
 - Access to medical assistance for various reasons and emergencies.
 - Volunteer uniforms for each day.
 - Plenty of comfortable and air-conditioned transportation from hotels to the golf course, airport to hotel, dorm rooms to golf course, and back – at all hours of the day.
 - On-site computer and cell-phone access so superintendents can catch up with their own staff and families.
 - Punctual starting times for daily staff meetings. This will reduce confusion about arrival and start times.
 - A well-supplied volunteer information package that includes items such as daily uniforms, maps to the golf course, hotel locations, restaurant locations, a map of club property, irrigation maps, on-course food vouchers, sunscreen, sunglasses, ear plugs, a water bottle, energy bars, a hat and an alarm clock with extra batteries.
 - A personalized thank you letter on club stationary and a small appreciation gift.
- All volunteers must realize it's your golf course on which they're working, not theirs, and should do what's asked without question. They should know they might not have a glamorous job, but that's part of volunteering. It should be a fun, educational and rewarding experience. **GCI**