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MOVING FORWARD

During the last two years, the International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association has been moving quickly to build an association on a worldwide scale for equipment technicians. During those two years, we've overcome many obstacles, and now we can say, formally, the IGCEMA is here to stay. Most recently, we've established our 501(c)(6) nonprofit designation and built a strong foundation to help bring us into the future.

Since our inception, we've also seen our membership increase from a handful of members to more than 500 throughout the world. Our membership consists of a wide cross section of the industry, including talented technicians setting up equipment for The Ryder Cup, turf equipment engineers and golf course owners in Europe.

The biggest reason we've been successful so far is technicians' drive to make a statement in our industry. For many years, technicians have been the behind-the-scenes heroes who help produce the smooth playing surfaces so many golfers enjoy. Now the tides are beginning to turn, and many are being looked at as professionals, and more importantly, equals.

The IGCEMA has achieved other goals as well. With the help of sponsors, we've sent seven equipment managers to the Golf Industry Show to experience the event and have the opportunity to discuss equipment with engineers and fellow technicians. Sponsors also have allowed us to send technicians to NASCAR races and manufacturing facility tours.

This year, we hosted a booth at the GIS in Orlando, and we will host a booth at the BTME conference, a turf management trade show in Harrogate, England, in January. In 2007, we put on presentations in South Africa as we traveled with the Federation of European Golf Greenkeepers Association on its road show. We also attended the FEGGA annual conference in Belgium, where we learned about the ever-changing environmental regulations

in Europe and the challenges technicians face there.

This year, IGCEMA has many new goals, one of which is to develop an industry-standard technician certification program. This topic has arisen many times during the past few years, and it's one that we, as an association, have struggled with. Certification is an important part of a profession; however, it's only as good as the people who take it. We have spent the past two years looking at different ways to approach this subject, and quite honestly, we always come back to the start. Developing a certification program isn't an easy task. The IGCEMA recently hired a consultant who specializes in certification programs, and we'll be putting together surveys and models of different programs to solicit input from technicians, manufacturers and superintendents.

The IGCEMA isn't interested in telling

technicians what they have to do. We want technicians to tell us what standards they want. With good feedback we'll be able to build an effective certification program. We're also working on completing job descriptions. There are many titles for technicians – from head mechanic to equipment manager to technician. While it might seem like they're all the same, they're really not. It's important potential employers be able to identify what type of candidates they're looking for by knowing what those individuals are capable of doing or can be responsible for. We hope this will clear up any confusion about the many different job titles floating around for technicians.

Finally, we'd like to thank all of our supporters, including superintendents, manufacturers and publications. Without all of you, technicians wouldn't be where they are today. The IGCEMA will continue to educate technicians for the future, and we hope all of you will join us as we move forward. GCI

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