

not jump at the first plausible opportunity. Tumlinson cautions that some rookie assistants say, "I'm gonna go to the highest level private club," but they don't look at all their options.

Superintendents shouldn't limit themselves once they've chosen a path either. It's quite possible to move from a public course to a private one or vice versa because the skills needed at both are similar.

"There's not a great deal of difference between private, where I've been all my life, and the place I'm at now, a high-end municipal course," Flaherty says.

The size of a club is something to think about because larger facilities often give assistants opportunities to grow, Tumlinson says. They can learn about negotiating, budgeting and planning, how to run a crew and top-flight management skills.

"If they don't know those things before they get to be a superintendent, they aren't going to last very long," she says.

Tumlinson believes the best first job is a quality internship that gives you a look at the entire industry.

"If they spend their internship raking bunkers then they're not going to get an idea of operating any kind of facility," she says. "But if they spend their internships learning about the profession, then they'll be better prepared."

Whatever your goals, you should make the best use of your time gaining experiencing to get to the top, but you should be patient as well.

"It's a fact – assistants today have to remain assistants longer than they did 10 years ago," Tumlinson says. "But it's invaluable time under the right mentor."

A mentor, too, is critical to your long-term success, especially at the beginning of your career. Finding your first position should be as much about finding an excellent mentor as it is about location, prestige or pay. A mentor will help you learn how to deal with agronomic issues, but the nuances of the political pitfalls at a highly visible course can be a bigger challenge to navigate without a guide.

Being hired at a top-notch club isn't as hard as one might think, Dey says. He recommends assistants approach the superintendents they work for directly and offer to take on whatever work is available.

"There's always a job out there, and if you shine, they're gonna move you up," Dey says. **GCI**

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Common-sense guidelines

Some say having a successful career depends on one's ability and attitude, as well as following some common-sense guidelines.

1. Pay attention – most superintendents that get fired aren't doing this.
2. Hire good people – those that are as happy with their job as you are with yours.
3. Be a jack of all trades.
4. Play golf at your course and others to get a true read on conditions.
5. Attend seminars and take every opportunity to learn.
6. Be loyal, but not blindly so, when it comes to equipment dealers.
7. Focus on training your staff well.
8. Develop a strong portfolio – show and tell about the problems you faced and how you solved them.
9. Hire people that balance your traits – if bookkeeping isn't your bag, hire an assistant that loves numbers.
10. Learn more Spanish.
11. Step back and look at how your course fits into the market mix of your area. Hone the features on the course to attract more golfers.
12. Find your niche.
13. Be confident but not arrogant.
14. Don't become close friends with individuals at your private club. Politics has doomed many good superintendents.
15. Use more than one vendor for purchases if possible.
16. Like what you're doing.
17. Don't hold grudges against coworkers. Professionals can get along with anyone.
18. Be patient.
19. Weigh the higher salary of private clubs against the better retirement at most municipal courses.
20. If you need help, ask for it.

Source: Golf Course Industry research



BY MARK LESLIE

Superintendent's dream turns into reality

KYLE EVANS OPERATES BELGRADE LAKES GOLF CLUB
A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY THAN MANY OTHERS WOULD

No range. No locker room. A sandwich shop but no 19th hole. Not even a pro. Yet "Top 100" is written all over Belgrade Lakes Golf Club in Maine. The driving forces behind its quick ascension to America's elite group of public golf courses are two diverse personalities –Harold Alfond, a Maine businessman and philanthropist, and Kyle Evans, a former golf course superintendent who once happened to tell Alfond about his aspirations of operating his own golf course.

It's a classic story: boy works at golf course growing up; learns the ropes from mowing to working the pro shop, managing the books and cleaning toilets; goes to college and gets a job at a big-time, out-of-state golf course; returns to his roots; is befriended by a wealthy club member; and, together, they make his dream come true.

Along with two other partners – realtors Pat Donahue and Gail Rizzo, who found the property – Evans, Alfond and British golf course architect Clive Clark developed a golf course on a hill that features a 360-degree view of several lakes and a forest.

"We knew we had a unique piece of property, but we never imagined we'd be 'Top 100 in America, Best New Upscale Public Course in America,' one of only a dozen courses given five stars by Golf Digest," says the 49-year-old Evans.

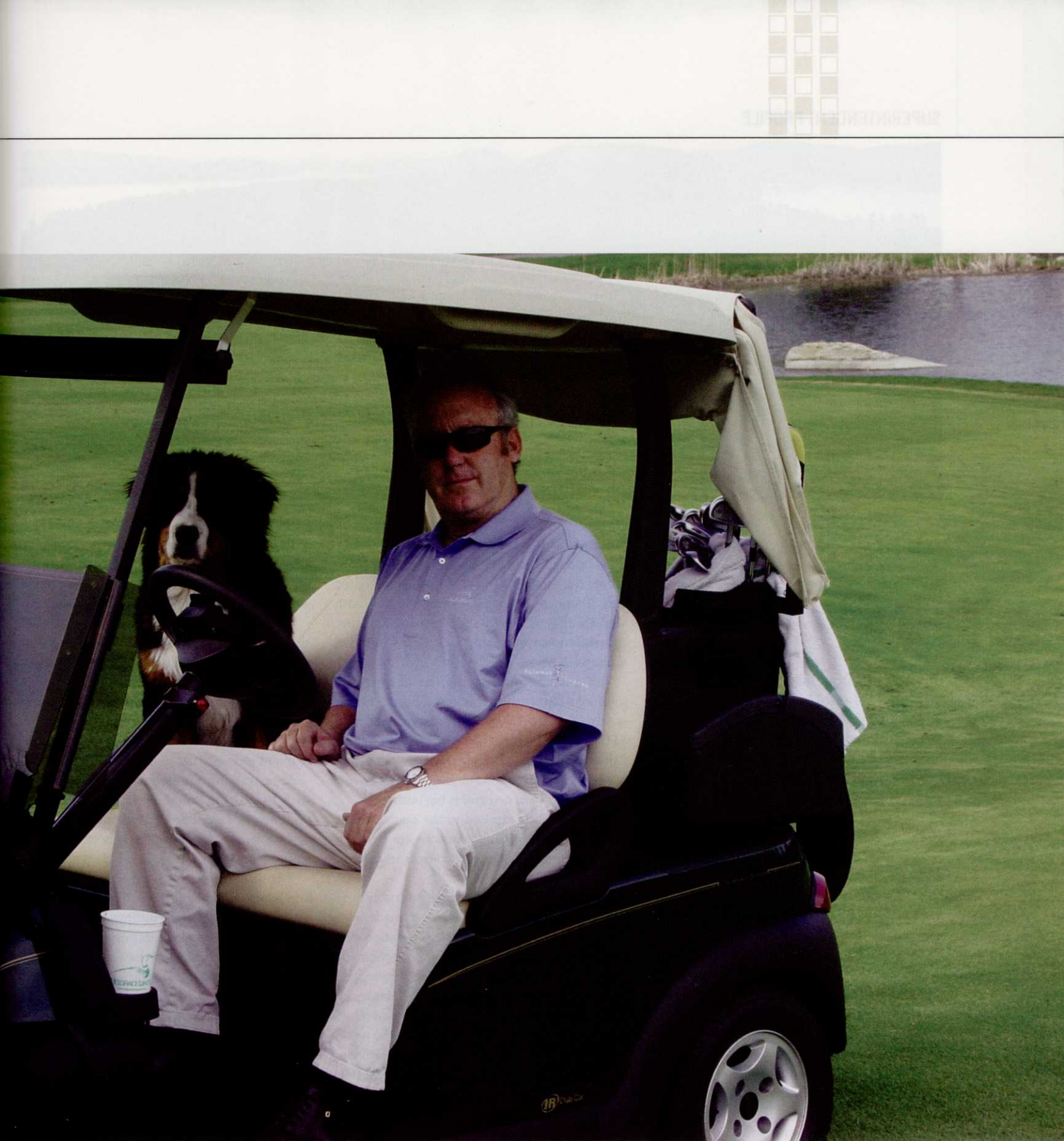
The 120-acre golf course, which is part of a larger 260-acre property, has appeared in golf calendars, desk calendars, books and in a series of postcards. Sparkling white birch trees flash through pine trees and dark evergreens, and piles of sun-washed white stones form 12-foot-high walls and line several fairways. The first hole features a 100-foot drop to a wide hilltop that falls away to the green, and the 18th hole features a 20,000-square-foot double green with the ninth hole snuggled at the foot of a steep incline about 150 feet below the clubhouse.

Evans shared his dream with Alfond about a dozen years ago.

"My course will be public-access only – no members, a quality product, playable and built to be easily maintained," Evans says.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

There have been two defining moments in Evans' career: the day he began working at Naples (Maine)



Kyle Evans and his dog McKinley drive throughout the golf course with an eye for detail. Evans says every day has to be the best because the staff never knows who's coming. Photos: Belgrade Lakes Golf Club

SUPERINTENDENT PROFILE



The first hole features a 100-foot drop to a wide hilltop that falls away to the green. Photo: Belgrade Lakes Golf Club

Golf and Country Club as a teenager and the instant Alford asked him if he was ready to risk he and his wife Margie's "fortune" and add it to those of Alford, Rizzo and Donahue to realize his dream.

When Evans was 15 years old, he worked with golf pro and superintendent Chet Cutting, an old-school hard worker who taught Evans a strong work ethic and how to treat people the right way. A competitive golfer, Cutting took Evans as his caddy to tournaments throughout New England and exposed him to the golf culture, including excellent golf courses, players and superintendents. Donald Ross's Portland Country Club and Poland Spring Golf Club became Evans' favorite local layouts while playing on his high-school golf team.

With a degree in commercial recreation from Springfield (Mass.) University – where Evans also played on the men's golf team – he returned to Naples in 1980. He intended to teach – like his father, Dean, who, now retired, works at Belgrade Lakes part time – but Evans became more interested in golf and drifted toward the maintenance end of the business.

"It was more interesting than the pro shop," he says. "I had never realized how technical maintenance had become."

At that point, Evans met Joseph Troll, a

professor at the University of Massachusetts' Stockbridge School. Troll encouraged Evans to attend the Stockbridge School, which accepted only 30 students at the time. Evans did, and, with the help of Troll, eventually became an assistant superintendent at Spook Rock Golf Course in Ramapo, N.Y.

"It's a terrific product and one of the really successful municipal golf venues," Evans says. "It hosted 50,000 to 60,000 rounds a year and held a PGA qualifying event while I was there. Angelo Palermo ran a well-orchestrated machine that was profitable and a good model for other towns. That's where I learned golf is big business."

Evans also was exposed to the operations at Winged Foot Golf Club, Westchester Country Club and other classic golf courses in eastern New York.

Meanwhile, the golf course industry was changing rapidly. Vast strides were made with lightweight mowing, automatic irrigation systems and new types of turfgrasses. Also, chemical controls for turf disease were being developed.

After two years at Spook Rock, a homesick Evans returned to Maine as superintendent at Springbrook Golf Club in Leeds. There, he made a number of changes to the course and oversaw its maintenance during the two years it hosted the Maine Open.

"That was probably the toughest job I ever had because of the lack of resources," he says. "In New York, if they needed it, they had it. But when you can afford just two fertilizer applications a year, you want to make sure you use them the right way. The same with other chemicals. If you ran out, you didn't get more. Also, using

older equipment and dealing with the labor force – there were no full-time people – was challenging. For example, we used a fire truck to pump water to the entire golf course."

After five years working with Shirley Hamel and Joe and Jeanine Golden, Hamel's son-in-law and daughter who had become Evan's close friends, Evans wrested himself away and became superintendent at the private Waterville Country Club in Maine. It was there he met Alford, and it was a friendship that led to the second defining moment in Evans' career and life.

After walking the Belgrade Lakes property with Rizzo and Donahue, having completed preliminary engineering work and a business outline, Evan's dream suddenly became a scary reality one night.

"Mr. Alford told Gail and Pat the only way he'd invest in the project was if I agreed to go in on it; and I had to put my mortgage on it," Evans says. "That's the way he does business. He wants everyone who's involved to have a financial part in it so you won't quit, and you have three or four minutes to make a decision."

Evans and his wife Margie have two sons, Tyler and Rees, who were 9 and 5 years old at the time, so there was much to weigh.

ATTENTION-GETTER

Alford's mantra was golf, golf, golf and don't get caught up in anything else, just go with what we know, Evans says. That simplicity, along with the beauty of the location and challenge of the golf course, attracts wealthy people.

One day, Wayne Huizenga, a billionaire businessman, helicoptered in with Bobby Wadkins,

a PGA Tour pro, and Tom Fazio, a golf course architect only to return for an encore a couple days later. Another time, Hootie Johnson, the president of Augusta National Golf Club, helicoptered in with friends. One summer, Paul Newman was a frequent visitor while filming a movie nearby. Many others, well-heeled enough to have their own helicopters but unfamiliar to Evans, have landed on the practice green atop the hill.

"They all changed their shoes on the bench next to the putting green," Evans says. "We treat everyone the same."

Since joining the Belgrade Lakes project, Evans has been involved in operating a facility that has attracted attention from the beginning. The course opened shortly before The Country Club at Brookline outside Boston hosted the Ryder Cup. Since Clark, a former BBC color commentator and British amateur champion, had designed the course, media and professionals from Britain, Europe and America traveled to Belgrade to play it.

Though the center of attention at times, Evans defers credit to those around him, some of whom have worked with him for 20 years, including business manager Nate Fulling, superintendent Phil Landry and mechanic Doug Gordon. Fulling has worked for Evans since he was 14, and Landry and Gordon were on Evans' crew at Waterville.

THE MENTOR

For Evans, he is to his employees as Chet Cutting was to him.

"He is my mentor," says Fulling, 32, who has worked for Evans since he was a high school freshman. "One of Kyle's major strong points is dealing with people and employees in particular. To use a sports analogy, compare him to some of the better football coaches. Some guys you want to play for, and some you don't. The atmosphere that Kyle can instill makes you want to work hard and do your best for him."

"Kyle always treats us with respect," says

Landry, a business school graduate who has worked for Evans since 1990. "He always listens. We feel a pride in the golf course. We all treat it like it's our own."

Landry says that, like Evans, he instills pride in his crew by being flexible and listening to them.

"We have a lot of retired guys who have a life outside here, and we try to make it a great place to come to work," Landry says.

The most important thing Landry has learned from Evans is paying attention to details.

"It's the little things that count, whether listening to an employee or picking up a piece of trash on the golf course," Landry says. "People see the little things."

Keeping employees long term is important to Evans, who says the bottom line is hiring the right people, seeing their best traits, having confidence in them and giving them the tools to succeed.

"If you can't get them exactly what they need, if they know you're trying to help, it makes a big difference," he says. "Employees are involved and have a part in the decision-making. We're a team, and that's how everybody looks at it. Consistency with our employees is a great help to our business. Everyone has a vested interest."

DIFFERENT OPERATION

Evans and his staff treat every golfer, rich and famous or not, the same, which means treating them specially. People-carriers meet golfers at their cars in the parking lot down the side of the hill, as well as at the ninth and 18th greens, and

carry them up the hill to the golf shop and first and 10th tees. Guests are treated like royalty by all the staff, from the pro shop to the starter to the grounds crew. And 15-minute tee times mean nobody is rushed.

"We only have one chance with golfers," Evans says. "Every day is a member-guest day for us. We have a unique approach to golf compared to most private clubs. We make sure we don't bother golfers – every day, not just on tournament days. We get out of people's way and make sure they have a great time. We don't have the luxury of just gearing up for the weekends. Every day has to be the best for us because we never know who's coming. Whether you're answering phones in the pro shop or raking bunkers, the attitude is the same among our employees."

Even though many operators reduces their rates in the fall, Evans doesn't.

"That's the best time to play up here," he says. "It's cool. The colors are gorgeous. We don't reduce rates in the fall. The days are shorter, and there are fewer tee times. I'd like to charge more."

In a world of cookie-cutter clubhouses, parking lots and practice ranges, simplicity and natural beauty set Belgrade Lakes apart.

"You can't mimic what we have here," Evans says. "People are blown away by the simplicity of it." **GCI**

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The crew, from left: superintendent Phil Landry, managing partner Kyle Evans, head mechanic Doug Gordon and business manager Nate Fulling. Photo: Belgrade Lakes Golf Club

BY JOHN WALSH



PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

TURFGRASS STUDENTS AND GRADUATES RECEIVE ADVICE FROM SUPERINTENDENTS DURING A CAREER-MINDED PROGRAM



Mark Swygert, golf course superintendent at Sage Valley Golf Club in Graniteville, S.C., discusses the finer points of his cultural practices with attendees of Jacobsen's Future Turf Managers Seminar, Milt Engelke, Ph.D., right, and Jacobsen employees. Photo: John Walsh

The industry values the people of its future like a child values a stuffed animal or blanket. Once again, that was evident at Jacobsen's annual Future Turf Managers Seminar, which returned in May from a brief hiatus. The program, which had its 31st session this year, started in 1971 and has had more than 600 students participate throughout the years. This year was the first time it was held at the Jacobsen University training center at the company's new headquarters in Charlotte, N.C.

The program provides participants with an opportunity to learn and interact with turf professionals in an educational environment under the guidance of industry leaders.

Fourteen turfgrass students and recent graduates from throughout the country attended this year's event, which

included plant tours, equipment testing, golf course visits and guest speakers.

Mark Wilson, CGCS, at Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville, Ky., was one of the speakers. Wilson gave attendees advice about entering the superintendent profession and golf course maintenance industry. Wilson, who has been in the business for 36 years, a superintendent for 26 years and at Valhalla for 18 years, has survived the ups and downs of the business, including dealing with millionaires and workers who could barely read and write.

"It's not about the money," he says. "It's the value of what you do. Love your job, be humble no matter what, and have a good work ethic. At the top of the profession it's still very prosperous."

Wilson says he has always been around good people. He employs 25 to 35, many of whom who have turfgrass



Jacobsen's new training center is located at the company's new headquarters in Charlotte, N.C. Photo: John Walsh

degrees, and hires five interns a year. He has three assistants (who make \$35,000 to \$40,000 a year) – one in charge of the front nine, one in charge of the back nine and one in charge of the grounds. He has one full-time worker for every three holes.

"The past 10 years, I've always promoted from within," he says, adding that assistants can expect to put in 60 hours a week.

Currently, Wilson and his staff are renovating the course in preparation for the 2008 Ryder Cup, which he says will generate \$125 million of economic impact the week it's in Louisville. For tournament preparation, there will be 70 volunteers and 30 staff workers to maintain the course. The \$3-million renovation includes:

- Renovating 14 holes;
- Regrassing all greens;
- Rebuilding five greens;
- Building a \$400,000 waterscape;
- Rebuilding three new tees;
- Renovating all bunkers; and
- Lengthening the course to 7,515 yards.

The course, which opened in 1986, featured Pennncross bentgrass on the greens. Now they're being changed to an A-1/A-4 bentgrass mix. Renovating the greens includes stripping the sod 1 inch, aerifying 3 inches deep, deep tining, making slope changes, applying methyl bromide

then seeding. After the greens are grown in, they're mowed as soon as possible. During the grow-in, Wilson applies fertilizer every week.

"It takes two weeks from the time you seed to the first mow, and you have 95-percent coverage," he says, adding that A-1 grows in more quickly than A-4.

Valhalla, which is owned by the PGA of America, has 250 members and a liberal guest policy, Wilson says. It generates between 18,000 and 20,000 rounds a year, 60 percent of which are with caddies.

Before coming to Valhalla, Wilson worked at public and private courses in Ohio, Florida and Kentucky.

"At a high-end course, you're basically a people manager," he says. "You make decisions and motivate people. The team concept is important to wipe out any big task. You find solutions to problems. The trend is how quick can you fix things."

Wilson believes one out of every five turfgrass graduates eventually will become a golf course superintendent, pointing out some of the harsh realities of the industry, including that of 250 golf courses in Kentucky, 50 have budgets of a half million or more, and seven out of 10 golf courses are struggling.

Another speaker, Fred Gehrisch, CGCS, at

Highlands Falls Country Club in Highlands, N.C., emphasized the need to be a member of local, state and national superintendent associations to reach the top of the profession. Associations have relationships with professors and help get students jobs. Associations also provide benefits such as:

- Research
- Networking
- Education
- Scholarships
- Industry promotion
- Lobbying
- Best practices
- Political power
- Public relations
- Retirement programs
- Insurance
- Discussions forms
- Seminars
- Trade shows
- Marketing tools
- Resume service
- Career development
- Negotiating.

Gehrisch advises those entering the profession to work through superintendent associations to volunteer at major tournaments.

Gehrisch, who is working to finish his MBA, also emphasizes continuing education. He says being certified helps superintendents land jobs in the top 20 percent of the market.

Jeff Kent, golf course superintendent at Quail Hollow Country Club in Charlotte, N.C., told attendees they need to want a job more than the next guy. Preparedness is the key to moving up in the profession, he says.

“You need to make sure you’re prepared as much as possible before you say you want to be a superintendent,” he says. “You need to swim at the deep end of the pool and swim with the sharks to know if you can do it. It’s tough to get into the business and get to the top. Details are important. Set yourself apart and surround yourself with good people.”

The panel of Wilson, Kent, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station Research & Extension Center professor Milt Engleke, Ph.D., and Clark Cox, sports turf manager for the University of South Carolina, gave other advice to attendees:

- Know some Spanish.
- Know the game of golf.
- A degree qualifies you, but doing hands-



Seminar attendees toured Sage Valley Golf Club to see superintendent Mark Swygert's operation. Photo: John Walsh

on work is an important part of the learning process.

- Work at a top club and at a smaller club where you do it all.
- Volunteer to work preparing for tournaments. It's the little things that count.
- Grin and bear it. There's no room for whining. You need to be willing to put in the time.
- Be able to explain agronomics in layman's terms and the consequences of your agronomic decisions.
- Sacrifice, work late and work overtime. Be patient because you won't be on a fast track to the top of the profession.
- Las Vegas is a hot market right now for golf. Go there to get in on the ground level of a project.
- Be willing to relocate.

FEEDBACK

Steve Loughran, one of the attendees, will earn a Bachelor of Science degree in urban horticulture and turfgrass management from the University of Rhode Island in December. Currently, Loughran is an assistant-in-training at Fairview County Club in Greenwich, Conn. Loughran, like the rest of the group, was nominated by one of his turfgrass professors to attend the program.

“I thought it would be a great opportunity to network with peers with the hope of becoming a superintendent,” he says about attending the seminar. “The Jake staff treated us like professionals, not students. This was geared for us. It was awesome that we had so many guys we could talk to about different concepts and ideas about running premier golf courses. Jeff Kent shocked us all back to who we really are and the difference of the industry compared to 25 years ago. This event is a resume builder.”

Jason Frank, a 2005 University of Florida graduate with a degree in turfgrass science, is in graduate school earning a master's degree in turfgrass science. Frank says he's always looking to meet new people and learn new things.

“Everyone has four-year degrees,” he says. “It's things like this that set you apart and further yourself. All the prominent members in the industry that spoke on a personal level stood out. Jake brought these tops guys in to advise us and help us get to where they're at. Attending this event might open connections in the future. Maybe a job opens up, and somebody I saw here could open a door, or maybe a job opens up with Jake. As a result of all the networking with other students here, maybe we each know of a job opportunity.” **GCI**

BY DOUG SAUNDERS

GIVING BACK

COMPANIES AND INDIVIDUALS RAISE AND DONATE MONEY FOR CHARITIES UNRELATED TO GOLF

The golf industry is an integral part of charity. In fact, according to the National Golf Foundation, U.S. courses host more than 140,000 fund-raisers annually that generate \$3.2 billion per year for good causes. Course managers understand the importance of these events to their organizers. Managers also balance requests for the use of their facilities with the bottom line in a way that allows them to be good benefactors.

The PGA Tour has developed a strong connection between its events and charities. Throughout the past 15 years, it has raised more than \$1 billion for charity. This type of giving has filtered through the entire industry in many forms.

Most companies are involved in philanthropic endeavors, such as contributing to the Red Cross, United Way or Salvation Army; but many find more personal reasons to connect with smaller charities to improve the human condition.