

Shades Of Green

■ OPINION

OK, so Dallas isn't the vacation destination that Orlando is, and the weather was lousy most of the time, which limited sightseeing.

But according to the exhibitors, it sure made for good trade show attendance. And let's face it: Once you're inside the meeting rooms or on the trade show floor, GCSAA's 72nd International Conference and Show could have been held in Timbuktu for all it mattered.

My view of the show has shifted since I've become an association executive. I miss the old routines now that I have new priorities. As a full-time superintendent, I used to gorge myself on seminars for four days before the general sessions and special events. I looked forward to the trade show, which offered some much needed relief from the classes.

The seminars were valuable opportunities to hear other perspectives from a diverse audience. The breaks gave you opportunities to follow up and meet new people. I miss that. Now, in the chapter leaders track, I have a new crowd I hang with, and the informal learning still goes on after the formal presentations are done.

Like superintendents, we chapter managers and newsletter editors have common problems. Sometimes we can't help but talk about some of our members who won't write articles, return calls, pay dues on time or meet deadlines.

While superintendents are sharing better ways to manage turf, association employees are in forums sharing ways to overcome association apathy. We discuss how to grow memberships and improve member services. We learn how to communicate better with members and the media, handle affiliation paperwork and publish newsletters.

We receive pointers on applying for matching research funds, as well as working with legislators and regulators. We do so in the hopes of helping chapters around the country become as successful as they can be.

One of the big issues facing chapters today is, believe it or not, taxes. Though these groups started as informal meetings to discuss

New Priorities Shape Show Plan

BY JOEL JACKSON



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common problems. many have now grown to the point that they publish newsletters — with advertising. Such advertising is considered unrelated business income by the IRS, and it is taxable.

Although there are the usual loopholes and exceptions to IRS regulations, the days of shoe-box accounting done by a volunteer superintendent are over. The penalty for not knowing the proper laws could be loss of tax exempt status for your group. Those are the kind of things we debate in our forums while the show goes on.

I have traded in my weed identification and insect control classes for the Greens-and-Grassroots government-relations forum, where we discuss the latest trends in regulatory action as we confront the weird science of politics, which often ignores the science of turf maintenance when regulations are designed.

I would have liked to have seen Scott O'Grady's talk on his survival experiences in Bosnia — I'm assuming that the word "survival" makes his talk appropriate for the GCSAA general session — but that session conflicted with the chapter manager's forum. That was too bad because it's not as if we association executives don't need survival training, too.

Not every chapter needs to hire an executive director or association manager, but every chapter should consider having at least a part-time employee to do the necessary evil paperwork to provide continuity and stability.

With the advent of GCSAA's chapter leaders track, I have found new reasons for attending the show. But the bottom line is still all about learning.

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