

Focused on Educating The Next Generation

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR., Managing Editor

One of the first things you hear when you talk to people about Brian Darrock is his commitment to education for himself and for those who work for him.

"Brian likes teaching," says David Kovack, sales representative for the Floratine Products Group of Southwest Turf Management, an independent distributor located in Palm Desert, Calif. "Brian feels it's his duty to train and supervise his assistants and interns so they can go on to bigger and better positions."

"He's a good, solid neighbor," says Mike Hathaway, certified superintendent and director of operations at The Bridges at Rancho Santa Fe (Calif.) GC. "He's the first to be there with ideas and gives freely of his time whenever a colleague needs help.

For his commitment to education and to helping his colleagues, Darrock is a recipient of *Golfdom's* Keepers of the Green Award, sponsored by Floratine Products, for being one of the nation's best superintendents/mentors.

Darrock, superintendent of Fairbanks Ranch CC in Rancho Santa Fe, Calif., likes education so much that he spent two years teaching classes at the San Diego Golf Academy to future golf professionals to help them better understand what superintendents do for a living. In fact, he would still be doing it today if the academy hadn't moved its headquarters farther from Fairbanks, which made it impossible for him to keep teaching. Darrock already commutes one hour daily from Murrieta, Calif., to his course, and he decided he couldn't continue to teach because it would add to the time he spends away from his wife and three children.

"It was a good experience for me and — hopefully — for my students as well," Darrock says. "Older golf professionals always thought of superintendents as Carl Spackler from *Caddyshack*. They're becoming more

familiar with what we do, and I was happy to contribute in whatever small way I could to that effort."

"I have to credit my father with raising me to have the attitude that you always want to help other people," Darrock says. "I've always thought that it's my obligation to give back to this industry, and that's what I try to do."

Kovack, who nominated Darrock for the award, says he knew what kind of person Darrock was when the superintendent was the president of the board of directors for the San Diego GCSA and established a benevolent fund to help golf course maintenance employees through difficult times, whether because of injuries or an illnesses. Darrock's commitment to the fund stemmed from his own experience when one of his crew members was injured. Darrock solicited donations from his colleagues to help the employee feed his family.

Brian Sandland, superintendent of Escondido CC in Escondido, Calif., worked for Darrock for six years, the last four as his assistant. He says Darrock was invaluable in helping him advance to his current position.

"I had the pleasure of being Brian's assistant for four years, and it was an experience I wouldn't trade for anything," Sandland says. "I would never have achieved [my current position] without the mentoring I received from him."

Darrock's efforts leave a lasting impression on those who work with him, even if it's only for a short time. Just ask Thad Kintigh, superintendent of the PGA of Southern California in Calimesa, Calif. Kintigh interned with Darrock in 1993 and credits him with helping him decide to enter the industry.

"I was only there for six months, but Brian opened my eyes to the possibilities of this profession," Kintigh says. "He taught me what separates a great course from a good course. He also makes you feel like you matter to him. ■

Brian Darrock

Superintendent of
Fairbanks Ranch CC
in Rancho Santa Fe, Calif.

