

# 'Running' the Show



We — the editors of *Golfdom* — hurried to as many seminars and press conferences as we could to bring you this comprehensive report on the GCSAA Conference and Show

## BY GOLFDOM STAFF

*Editor's note: The GCSAA Conference and Show was held Feb. 9-14 in and around the San Diego Convention Center. The weather was great — not that Golfdom staffers got to enjoy it. We were inside most of the time, usually in the confines of the vast San Diego Convention Center. So much for SoCal's laid-back tradition — we hustled and hustled for four days, not getting any time to spend poolside. Well, as they say in Hollywood, the city further north of San Diego, on with the show — coverage, that is.*



LARRY AYLWARD

Did you see GCSAA CEO Steve Mona on TV? Syngenta TV, that is. The Syngenta Turf Network broadcast live interviews at its booth during the show. Viewers could watch telecasts of the broadcasts on TVs positioned on the other side of the company's booth.

## No low carbs for turf

Forget about putting turf on the low-carbohydrate Atkins diet. That's the advice from Jack Fry, professor of horticulture and turfgrass management at Kansas State University.

While a low-carbohydrate diet will work well for some people, who can eat meat, plants need to have an avenue to make food. That avenue is carbon dioxide, which the plants turn into carbohydrates, Fry said.

Fry delivered a full-day seminar on plant physiology that covered all kinds of turf management situations — from heat to cold, from baking sun to shade, and from drought to damp.

"Mowing has an impact on all of these stress situations," Fry told superintendents.

One take-home message: Raise the mowing height up and avoid the problem of putting greater stress on the plant's ability to produce beneficial carbohydrates.

"Even raising the mower as little as one-thirty-second of an inch on bentgrass greens will make a difference in the plant's ability to produce carbohydrates," Fry said.

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### Get their opinions

David Davies, certified superintendent of the Palo Alto (Calif.) Municipal Golf Course, says superintendents should make use of all communication streams before making budget decisions. Davies spoke during the *Innovative Superintendent Session II*.

Superintendents should talk to the pro shop and maintenance staffs to hear what golfers are talking about, Davies said. That will help superintendents put their budgetary priorities in order.

"Let everyone know that you want to hear what they're hearing," Davies said. "In a perfect world, superintendents would get a chance to talk to all the golfers, but you can't. So you need to make use of all channels of communication available."

### Habla Espanol

"In a Hispanic culture, what you say may not be seen as so important. What you do may have more meaning," Thomas R. Maloney told attendees of the *Managing a Multicultural Workforce* seminar.

Maloney is senior extension association in the Department of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell University. He is also co-author (with Robert A. Milligan) of *Human Resource Management for Golf Course Superintendents* (John Wiley & Sons, 1996).

Maloney said studies show that 30 percent of superintendents have less than six years of multicultural management experience, despite the fact that the vast majority have to deal with local work forces and immigrant Hispanic work forces.

Maloney said successful supervisors have learned to understand cultural dif-

ferences and have developed strategies that value those differences. In addition, Maloney said effective supervisors find a way to overcome the language barrier, either by learning Spanish themselves, providing English-language education to employees or identifying a "go-to" person on the crew who acts as interpreter and intermediary.

On a related topic, Alan Hess, certified superintendent of Augusta Pines Golf Club in Spring, Texas, told a group of his colleagues that they should learn how to speak Spanish to enhance their careers.

"If you can develop a core vocabulary, it will help you communicate better with your crew members," Hess said. "If you all work together, you can create better cross-cultural understanding. You can help them learn English, and they can help you learn Spanish."

## Nantz Puts His Money Where His Broadcast Is

Jim Nantz made superintendents a promise during his keynote address at Thursday's opening session during the GCSAA Conference and Show. Nantz told the several thousand superintendents in the audience that he hasn't done a good job of talking about the importance of golf course maintenance while broadcasting golf tournaments for CBS. Then Nantz said that needed to change.

"I vow on this stage to do more," he said. "I stand in awe of your profession and what you do."

The 44-year-old Nantz, who played on the golf team at the University of Houston, seemed genuinely enthusiastic about speaking to the superintendents. In fact, the opening session ended at 11 a.m.,

30 minutes later than it was supposed to, because Nantz was still talking.

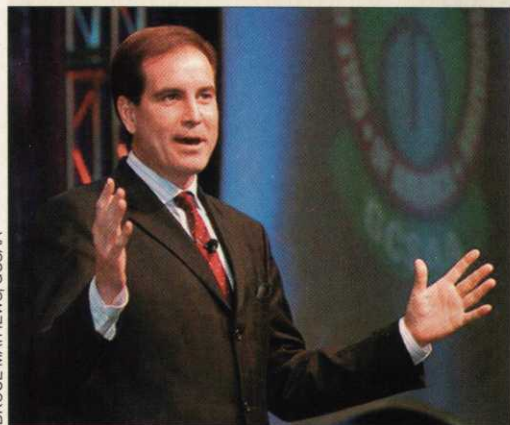
Nantz, a mainstay in the broadcasts of golf, football and college basketball, said he would rather broadcast one Masters championship than 20 Super Bowls. When he was a student at Houston, Nantz dreamed of covering the Masters for CBS.

He got his wish in 1986 when he was 26. That also

happened to be the year that Jack Nicklaus mounted an incredible third-round run to win the tournament. Nantz said he often felt speechless during the final round, in awe of the 46-year-old Nicklaus' exploits.

After Nicklaus birdied the 16th hole, Nantz announced one of his most memorable broadcasting lines, "The Golden Bear has come out of hibernation."

— Larry Aylward, Editor



### About your irrigation system ...

Why would a superintendent want to renovate his irrigation system? Let Larry Spain, a field training manager for The Toro Co., count the ways. Spain spoke as part of the seminar, *Water Woes: New Solutions for Golf Courses*.

The reasons a superintendent would want to consider an irrigation renovation include the high costs to maintain current irrigation systems, increased operational efficiencies and improved playability on golf courses.

Increased competition among courses could also lead a superintendent to perform an irrigation upgrade to get a leg up on the competition, Spain said. A course could differentiate itself with an irrigation upgrade because fewer courses are being built, fewer rounds are being played and green fees are being lowered, he added.

"Customers are looking for good conditions," he said. "Avid golfers say the reason they play [certain] courses is because of their conditions."

### China, here comes Hills

Architect Arthur Hills said it's always been his dream to build a course in China. During the show, Hills



announced he found a partner in the country to help him realize it.

Hills and his Toledo, Ohio-based firm, Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest & Associates, announced plans to build the course after finding the right partner in the Xin Dong Yang Group.

The project is expected to be a 36-hole course a few miles from Shanghai, China, that will also include residential development, said John Mai, principal partner of the Xin Dong Yang Group. The partners expect to finish the project in either 2006 or 2007.

"We want to make this project the best golf course in China," Mai said. "We're looking forward to working with Arthur Hills and his partners to achieve that goal."

### Behind "bad" water

Many superintendents report "bad water" in their irrigation. However, Clark Throssell, director of research for the GCSAA, advises against lumping problems as "poor water" or "bad water."

"Get away from generalities. Get to the root of why the water is bad, then formulate a solution to the problem," he advised superintendents at a session on irrigation water quality.

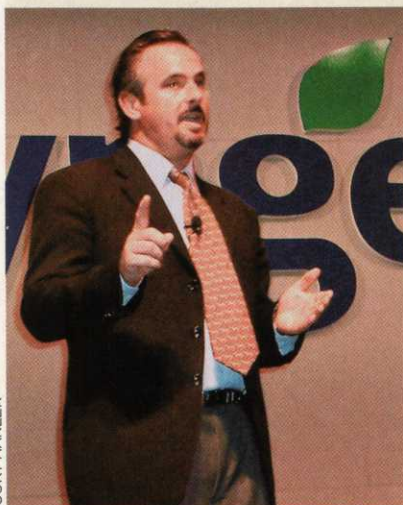
Throssell and David Kopec, an extension specialist with the University of Arizona, told of four situations where acidification may be helpful in solving a water (or soil) quality problem:

- Water with high residual sodium carbonate (RSC) might benefit from a sulfur burner or acid injection system to neutralize the carbonates and bicarbonate in the water. This will lower RSC and makes water safe to use without risk of damaging soil structure.
- Water with high sodium-absorption rates (SAR) can be treated by adding sulfur to the soil. The irrigation system is used to distribute the sulfur contained in the irrigation water, but the SAR of the water itself is not lowered.
- Prevent calcite formation, Throssell advised. Calcite is crystallized calcium carbonate — white deposits that decrease water infiltration. Lowering the pH of irrigation water below 7 by using a sul-

## Feherty: The Funniest Man to Walk a Fairway Since Bob Hope

We have a greenkeeper at a tiny Irish golf club to thank for David Feherty. The former Tour journeyman turned CBS commentator said it was the keeper of the greens at his father's club in Bangor, Northern Ireland, who gave him a couple of cut-down clubs and sent him on a path that would lead to 10 European Tour victories, a Ryder Cup spot and now, a place in America's heart as the funniest man to walk a fairway since Bob Hope.

Feherty, the author of *A Nasty Bit of Rough*, wowed a crowd estimated at more than 1,000 at Syngenta's Green Carpet Preview with a rapid-fire series of observations and jokes. Make sure to read these with Feherty's Irish brogue in your mind:



CURT HARLER

**On Tiger Woods:** "Of the 10 greatest shots I've ever seen hit, Tiger's hit 15."

**On his career:** "I never had the desire to be No. 1. I'm just way too lazy."

**On golf course designers:** "I hate all the (blanks). There are sheep that have designed better golf courses than some of them out there."

**On famously deliberate player Bernhard Langer:** "He's so slow he could take an hour and a half to watch *60 Minutes*."

**On Annika Sorenstam's venture on the Men's Tour:** "I don't think there's been another athlete since Jesse Owens in 1936 (at the Berlin Olympics) who deliberately put themselves under that kind of pressure."

**On course conditioning:** "Golf courses are works of art now. There's been an extraordinary revolution in turf care."

**On superintendents:** "You do an extraordinary job."

— Pat Jones, Publisher

fur burner or acid-injection system will help prevent calcite buildup. While a problem in arid areas, calcium formation rarely happens in places with natural rainfall since rainfall is naturally acidic, Throssell noted.

■ Water with a low or zero RSC and high bicarbonate content would benefit from acidification of the water to help lower soil pH and maintain it at an acceptable level. This typically is a problem in areas with less than 20 inches rainfall per year where irrigation is used intensively for six months a year, sodium levels are moderate to high, and the soil is fine-textured.

### Fess up to the press, prof says

During his seminar on crisis communications, Max Utsler, professor of journalism

at the University of Kansas, told superintendents how to plan to deal with the press during a crisis before one comes up at their courses — or it might be too late.

Utsler said superintendents should cultivate good relationships with reporters, take responsibility when something goes wrong and don't hide from problems.

Those simple steps can mean the difference between a positive story about how you're dealing with the crisis and a negative story about how the problem happened in the first place, he said.

"If you work on building a level of trust with your local reporters, you may be able to mitigate some of the potentially damaging coverage when a crisis comes up," Utsler said. "It's when the reporters don't

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know who you are or think you're hiding something that you can get into trouble."

### "Help them win"

Ken Blanchard, chief spiritual officer of the Ken Blanchard Cos., a management and leadership training and consulting

firm, gave an uplifting speech to superintendents Friday during the show's general session. Blanchard, described as "insightful" and "compassionate" in his biography, basically told superintendents that the secret to success is to adhere to the good ol' Golden Rule.

BRUCE MATTHEWS, GCSAA



**"You want to create memories," spiritual speaker Ken Blanchard told attendees during the general session.**

Superintendents need to treat the people they come in contact with — from players and members to their crew members — with respect and dignity.

Blanchard said superintendents shouldn't just stop with satisfying customers.

"You want to blow them away," he said. "You want to create memories."

Regarding their workers, Blanchard said superintendents should help them "win" at their jobs.

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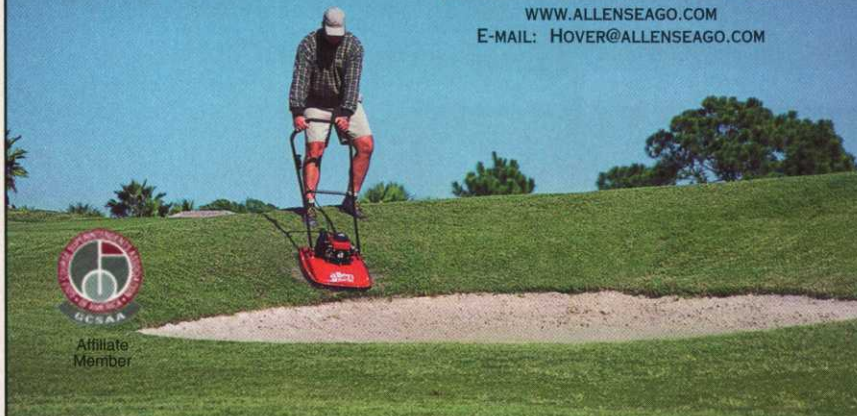
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### Roll(er) With It

Milt Engelke, turfgrass professor at Texas A&M Turf Research Program, knows a few things about unreasonable golfer demands. In his spare time, he moonlights as a consultant and has worked on many golf courses with demanding clientele.

Engelke, who spoke on Bentgrass Management and Root Zone Maintenance, said he is not a fan of rolling greens because of the damage it can do to the root zone. He told the superintendents at the seminar about how one creative superintendent dealt with his membership's demands that he roll greens that were already too fast.

"Every few days, he would put a roller into the back of a utility vehicle and make a couple of passes around the course where the golfers could see him," Engelke said. "Then he'd take the roller back to the shop and put it away — without ever using it once."

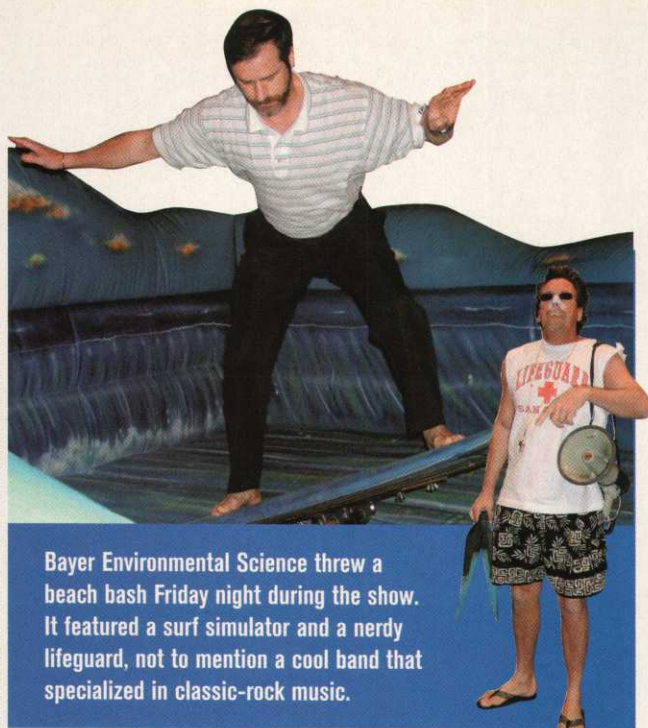
Engelke smiled at the group.

"He never got questions about rolling again," Engelke said. "The membership never knew the difference."

Engelke used the anecdote to illustrate a larger point — superintendents are often asked to perform tasks by golfers that don't make agronomic sense. He said superintendents need to be creative in finding ways to deal with those demands so they don't destroy turf.

— Frank H Andorka Jr.,  
Managing Editor





Bayer Environmental Science threw a beach bash Friday night during the show. It featured a surf simulator and a nerdy lifeguard, not to mention a cool band that specialized in classic-rock music.

"It's your job to help them win," he said. "Because if they win, you win, and the whole department wins.

"You need to let your [workers] know that their work is important—it's not gardening," Blanchard adds. "You want to treat your people in a way that makes them excited about what they want to do."

Superintendents shouldn't try to catch them workers doing tasks wrong on golf courses, Blanchard said.

"The key to developing your staff is to catch them doing something right," he added, and then let them know about the good things they're doing with positive remarks.

The bottom line, Blanchard stressed, is that everybody needs encouragement.

"How many of you are sick and tired of the praises you receive at your courses?" Blanchard asked with a smile. Audience members, of course, chuckled, signifying a collective "no."

## The next frontier?

Sean Hoolehan, certified superintendent of Wildhorse Resort Golf Course in Pendleton, Ore., told a group of superintendents that Native American reservations may be the next frontier in golf course development.

Hoolehan, who was moderating a panel called *Demystifying Golf Course Management and Development in Indian Country*, said there are 542 Native American tribes in the United States, but fewer than 50 of them have golf courses.

Many tribes are looking to diversify the economies, and those who have dabbled in casino gambling are looking for something to spur the next wave of development and employment, he said.

The Native American gambling industry currently brings \$14.5 billion in revenue to the tribes who have built casinos on their land, and they're looking for a good investment to spend it on, according to Hoolehan.

"There's a lot of interest in the Native American commu-

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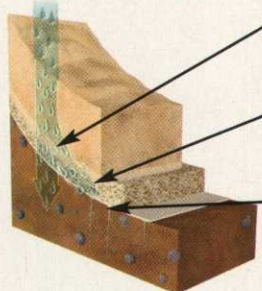
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## Running the Show

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nity in the golf course industry,” Hoolehan said. “They have the money [from gaming revenues] and the land. It’s a great opportunity for developers in a slumping market.”

### Got salt?

When most superintendents do a soil test, they take out a core, tear the top off and box what’s left to send to the lab.

But that traditional method won’t work if the superintendents are checking for the salt content of their soil, said Milt Engelke, turfgrass professor at Texas A&M Turf Research Program, at his Bentgrass Management and Root Zone Maintenance seminar.

Engelke said superintendents who remove the top layer of turf and soil from their samples would never find salt because it usually rises to the top.

“If you’re hoping not to find a salt problem, that’s the way to do it,” Engelke

said. “Of course, that won’t be an accurate representation of what’s actually going on.”

Engelke also said superintendents should treat a salt problem with a calcium treatment to make the salts water soluble again. If the soil pH is below neu-

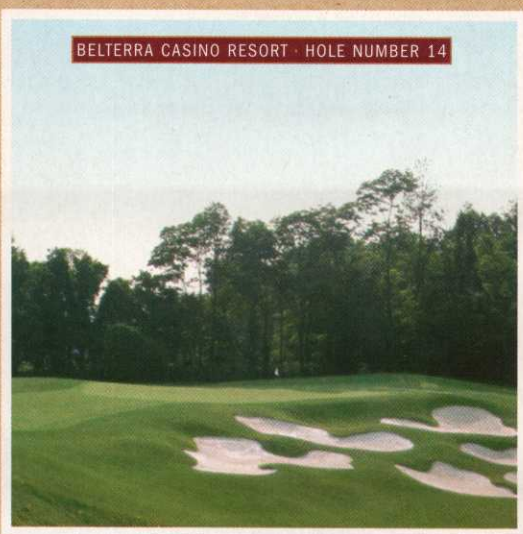
tral (7 or lower), then Engelke recommended using a calcium carbonate product to deal with the salts.

On the rare occasion superintendents find a salt problem in an acid soil, he suggested superintendents treat it with a calcium sulfate product.



Don Ewoldt, certified superintendent of Sand Creek Country Club in Chesterton, Ind., discussed the future of Audubon International with Joellen Zeh, program manager for the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, at the organization's summit during the show.

FRANK H. ANDORKA JR.



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## Pursell offers Hope

David Pursell, CEO of Pursell Technologies, presented GCSAA CEO Steve Mona with pencil-drawn portrait of Bob Hope during the show. For 10 years now, Pursell has created pencil-drawn portraits of some of golf's best characters and presented the originals to the GCSAA. In 1994, with a drawing of Old Tom Morris, Pursell began the annual tradition. This year he chose golf enthusiast Hope.

"When we were considering prospective subjects for this year's drawing, Bob Hope was at the top of the list," Pursell said. "He helped make golf a popular sport, which benefits us all today."

## Ford on Toro

The Toro Co.'s group vice president, Tim Ford, said by industry insiders to be a possible successor to longtime Toro CEO Ken Melrose, spoke with *Golfdom* during the show. Here's what he had to say:

**Golfdom:** John Deere has launched

its OneSource distribution initiative, and Jacobsen is re-energizing in the market. What's your strategy to compete?

**Ford:** Our competitors are good, tough companies. We think our bundling of products and great service is the right strategy for us. As for OneSource, only time will tell. We believe in depth, not breadth.

**Golfdom:** We've heard suggestions that Ken Melrose may retire soon. What's his legacy going to be when that day comes?

**Ford:** What he's created at Toro is, frankly, remarkable. He's been focused on results, accountability to the customer and creating a culture of respect for our employees. Because of that, Toro is a fun place to work. People don't come in worrying about whether they have jobs or not.

## Here's to you, Mr. Robinson

The annual GCSAA Golf Championship is a place for both competition and camaraderie. In the Championship Division, played under normal gross

scoring by serious low handicappers, the pursuit of the cup is intense. This year, under fabulous but demanding conditions in San Diego, Tommy Robinson of Ravinia Green Country Club in suburban Chicago, emerged victorious. Congrats to him.

## And finally, a few notes from the GCSAA front

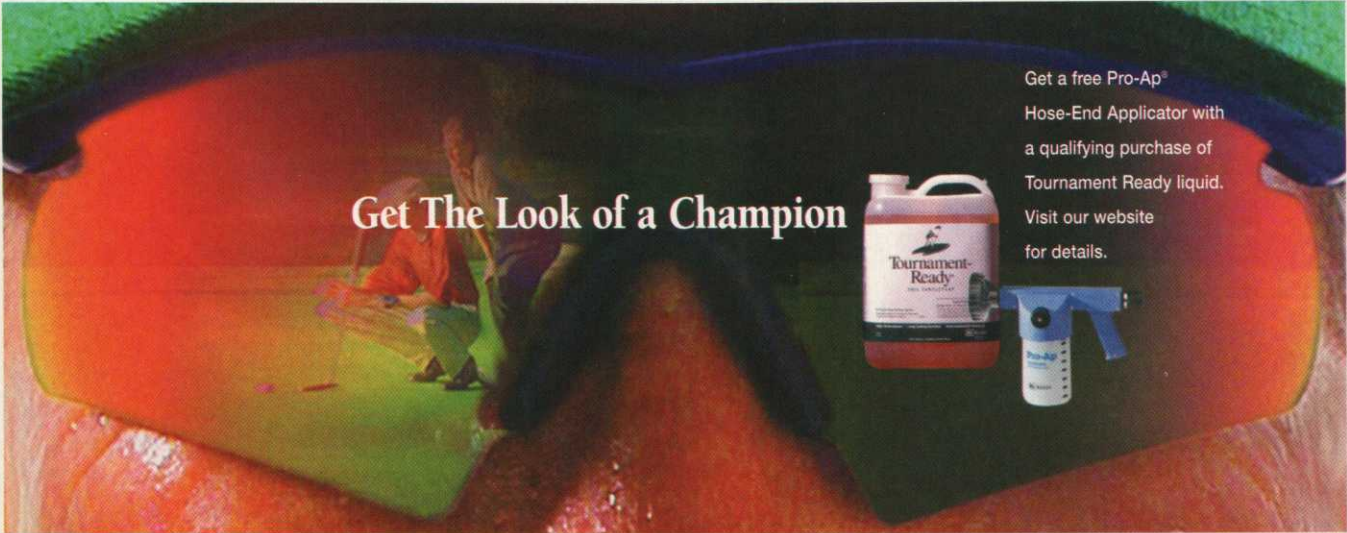
Attendance for the show was 19,317, up 1,153 from last year's total of 18,164 in Atlanta, which was to be expected. But exhibitors were down — 675 exhibitors covered 245,000 square feet of floor space, down slightly from the 701 exhibitors and 245,200 square feet of floor space last year.

Also, Mark J. Woodward, certified superintendent of Dobson Ranch and Riverview golf courses in Mesa, Ariz., was elected GCSAA president. ■

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*Frank H. Andorka Jr., Larry Aylward, Lynne Brakeman, Curt Harler and Pat Jones contributed to this report.*

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