

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Club Car's Price Increase Reflects Spike in Commodity Prices

Augusta, Ga.-based Club Car, said it's increasing prices for its 2010 model year vehicles because of a renewed spike in global commodity costs. The price for Club Car golf cars and utility vehicles increased about 2.5 percent on orders that began Nov. 20. Company officials pointed to the rising cost of raw material, especially lead, copper and aluminum, and a strengthening global economy as a primary reason for the increase.

Jacobsen Taps Griffith

Deanna Griffith has joined Jacobsen as marketing manager with responsibility for the Americas and Asia Pacific. Griffith was recruited from Exact Software Americas, based in Boston, where she was the senior marketing manager for the Americas, promoting and marketing brands and product lines for the business software solutions company.

Revenues Soar at Carolinas Show

The Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association annual Conference and Trade Show held in November experienced several key statistics that declined marginally, but net revenues of \$295,000 were the second highest in the 12 years since the event moved to Myrtle Beach, S.C., the association said.

"The success of our event represents an enormous vote of confidence," said the Carolinas GCSA's new Executive Director Tim Kreger, who assumes the title from Chuck Borman, who became the Carolinas GCSA's first full-time executive director in 1998.

"Confidence not only in our association but confidence in the future of the Carolinas golf industry." ■

Keith Smith says superintendents need to take control of their financial futures.

Keeping Track of the Budget — *Your Budget*

FINANCIAL ADVISER AND FORMER SUPERINTENDENT URGES HIS FORMER PEERS TO PAY ATTENTION TO THEIR FINANCES

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

Keith Smith says too many golf course superintendents are more concerned about managing their courses' budgets than their own. While that's not a bad thing, Smith, a financial adviser for Morgan Stanley Smith Barney in Akron, Ohio, says more superintendents owe it to themselves to pay more attention to their personal savings and spending. "They get so focused on the finances of their facilities that they

don't focus on their own," said Smith, who spoke at the Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's Conference & Trade Show in November in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Smith should know — he was a superintendent for 10 years before becoming a financial adviser.

The title of Smith's seminar was "Taking Control of Your Financial Future." The superintendents who came to hear Smith talk money seemed hungry for information. And Smith, who is well versed in the nuances of personal wealth, gave them

a lot to think about. And coming from Smith, a guy who has walked miles of turfgrass in their shoes, the superintendents trusted him.

Smith told superintendents the importance of calculating a net-worth statement and to establish a blueprint for achieving financial goals.

"You need to know where every dime of your money goes," Smith said, "Do you know?"

Saving for retirement is more important than saving for children's college funds.

In these days of economic uncertainty, Smith harped on the importance of accumulating at least six months to a year of living expenses in case of job loss or other circumstances that could negate income.

"It's extremely important to assess an emergency fund," Smith said. "And this is money you can't afford to lose. You can't put this money at risk."

Smith said superintendents should save about 20 percent of their salaries to live comfortably in retirement. He also said saving for retirement is more important than saving for children's college funds.

"There are a lot of ways to pay for education," Smith said. "There's only one way to fund retirement."

Despite the stock market's volatility, Smith advised superintendents to participate in 401(k) plans, especially if their companies are matching funds. He also recommended superintendents check they're portfolios every six months to make sure their getting the best bang for their bucks.

"This is almost like another job," Smith said of keeping track of personal finances. "It's that important." ■

I'll Take a ... Mulligan

SUPERINTENDENT WRITES BOOK ABOUT THE STORY OF HIS ADOPTED BLACK LAB

By John Walsh

Years ago, Greg Shaffer couldn't keep him in the golf car. Nowadays, he can't get him out. It's been nine years since the Class A golf course superintendent at Elcona Country Club in Elkhart, Ind., adopted Mulligan, his 11-year-old black Labrador retriever. And the dog hasn't left Shaffer's side.

"He goes to work with me and comes home with me," Shaffer says. "I've spent a lot of time with him. He doesn't like to be alone. He always stays close to the car."

In golf, a mulligan gives a player a second chance at a shot. In life, Mulligan got a second chance, too. He bounced around several foster homes in Colorado. In 1998, someone found him, undernourished and wandering the plains in the northeast area of the state, picked him up and turned him in to a Colorado Lab rescue group.

"I grew up with a black Lab," Shaffer says. "My wife Dia and I decided to get a Lab as a test before we had kids. Then we thought to adopt one. We filled out the paperwork and then received a phone call saying a dog was available."

At the time, Shaffer was working as an assistant golf course superintendent at the Country Club at Castle Pines in Castle Rock, Colo. At first, Shaffer didn't bring Mulligan to work every day, but once he developed confidence and Mulligan was trained more thoroughly, he came to the course daily.

Next, Shaffer moved on to Highlands Ranch (Colo.) Golf Club as

the superintendent. Then, Shaffer, who landed the head superintendent job at Elcona, and his wife moved back to Indiana, their home state, to raise their children.

The typical days haven't changed from course to course, but as Mulligan grew older, he became less active.

"When he was younger, you couldn't keep him out of the water," Shaffer says. "He chased wildlife all the time. Now, he's more selective and stays on the floor in my air-conditioned office."

Shaffer, with the help of his mother, Jan, a retired teacher and children's book author, tells the story of Mulligan in his recently published book, "View from the Cart." The book features 10 stories, including topics such as golf etiquette for the course dog, Mulligan's first ladies' day, encounters with members and wildlife, work-related injuries, and the touching story of his adoption. The book also includes information about the superintendent profession and life lessons learned from the dog on the golf course.

Shaffer also has a blog about Mulligan (www.viewfromthecart.blogspot.com) that includes pictures at work, an audio file that demonstrates the collaborative writing process and a link to purchase the book. ■

Greg Shaffer and Mulligan have plenty of stories to tell.

