



VALUABLE MEMBERSHIPS

By Michael Semler



I have just returned from the GCSAA Conference and Show in San Francisco and started to reminisce about past conferences I had attended and my membership in the GCSAA. Like all of my expenditures, I try to gauge the cost of that expense with the benefit portion. My attendance at the GCSAA Conference and my membership in the GCSAA are no different.

For some members, these are very easy questions to answer. The benefits far outweigh all of the costs, and a membership is a definite yes. For others, it can be a real dilemma. I happen to be one of those individuals who believe that my membership and my attendance at conferences is invaluable.

However, do not mistake my last statement with my feeling that the GCSAA can't improve on many fronts. I believe there are many improvements that should be made, but I also believe that this is neither the forum nor the place to address all of the things I would change at the national level.

How ironic, however, that an individual should have to use a cost/benefit analysis on a membership in one's own professional organization.

It would seem it should be a "no question type of question". I would assume the benefits of a membership would be very straightforward. In reality it is not that simple. Like many professional organizations, our own organization, the WGCSA, deals with this type of analysis and question constantly. There are still many golf course superintendents in Wisconsin who refuse to believe that their membership is an invaluable tool. This is certainly a limited viewpoint. Now let me explain.

If you take in all of the educational programs that can be attended in any given year, this factor alone may or may not sway you to be a member in the WGCSA. But you must remember that the continuing education is only one facet of our organization. You are forgetting about the other 80% of what the WGCSA does for you.

For instance, how about the \$13,500 annual donation which is being directed towards research and scholarships. Of that total, \$10,000 is directed to putting green management at our own O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research Facility. I consider this to be a monumental amount for a state organization such as our own!

We must also consider our organization's ability to promote the golf course superintendent as a professional on a state and local level. Our representation at a state golf expo can surely be looked at as a positive impact on the golfer. Our representation at the state level of government has predicated us as leaders in the industry, as opposed to followers. Are these not valuable traits of a WGCSA membership?

How about the ability of members to meet, converse and exchange ideas with other superintendents from around the state and region. Or our ability to disseminate information through our bi-monthly publication and various mailings throughout the year. Exchanging ideas and information is certainly a valuable portion of what your membership does for you.

When taken as a whole product, as opposed to any single facet, a membership in the WGCSA becomes a real bargain. And so it is with a membership in the GCSAA. When looked at on an individual basis, each facet of the GCSAA membership probably does not warrant the current cost. However, when looked at in its entirety, the membership takes on a new and valuable light. ♣

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