

The Gift of Spring

By David Brandenburg, Editor, The Grass Roots

It is easy to enjoy spring and appreciate the gift of beautiful days when we are offered truly nice weather. This spring started terrific and allowed operators to open earlier than normal with record revenue and play at some clubs. Things cooled off a bit in April but most badgerland courses were able to offer good conditions while getting projects done on the golf course well ahead of schedule.

A few of our readers reported “backwards” pages in the March/April issue of *The Grass Roots*. This problem occurred at the bindery where the cover and pages did not match up. The issue was readable but annoyingly so. I have a couple spare issues left if anyone needs a replacement. So far it was limited to 10 issues statewide.

Congratulations to Hornungs Golf Products of Fond du Lac for celebrating their 75th year in business. Hornungs is the “Walmart” of golf course and golf shop suppliers offering everything from pencils to shirts to tee and green equipment.

Clarence and Sue Hornung started the business out of their home in 1936. The business has since grown to a 50,000 square foot facility serving over 12,000 golf retailers around the world.

According to an article in April 2012 issue of *Golf Business* magazine some courses have found themselves in hot water with the United States Department of Labor for trading golf for golf course

marshal services.

The quid pro pro agreement breaches the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Operators of The Golf Club at Fleming island in Jacksonville, FL found out the hard way when they were forced to pay over \$73,000 in back pay to 19 workers last year. It is suggested the labor department is not targeting golf courses but in the Florida case a employee/volunteer complained when he was not allowed the tee time he wanted.

So although inspection is unlikely any course is only one complaint away from fines and back pay.

Congratulations to Renee Rioux a doctoral student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for being awarded a



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EDITORS NOTEBOOK

2011 Watson Fellowship. The award is given to students who are identified as promising future teachers and researchers in the field of golf course management.

The Watson Fellowship is funded by the Toro Co and the Environmental Institute for Golf and is named for James R. Watson Ph.D., retired vice president for Toro. The three winners were each given a \$5,000 postgraduate grant and received a all expense paid trip to the Golf Industry Show in Las Vegas. Renee is studying plant pathology at Madison.

Congratulations to Dr. Frank Rossi for being awarded the Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association Environmental Communicator of the Year Award.

The annual award is sponsored by Project Evergreen and given to someone in the green industry for "outstanding efforts in communicating the benefits of environmental stewardship to a particular audience in the turf and ornamental industry".

Dr. Rossi's sessions are well attended throughout the country and at the Golf Industry Show.

Congratulations to Adam Wepfer for being selected for the USGA Green Section Internship Program to travel with Senior Agronomist Bob Vavrek for one week this summer.

Adam is a Junior at the University of Wisconsin - Madison studying soil science with a emphasis in turfgrass management. Wepfer became interested in golf because his dad was an assistant superintendent. Last summer Adam did a internship at Winged Foot Golf Club in New York and this summer he will be Erin Hills Golf Course in Erin.



The USGA internship will allow Adam to be part of the Turf Advisory Service visits at different golf courses to obtain a broad view of the golf course industry.

Perhaps it is because my second child and son is graduating from high school and we will be "empty nesters" in fall when college starts or because I will soon be 46 and the next milestone will be the big 50 but this year feels different.

I have found myself enjoying this spring more than I have in years. I love going to work just about every day anyway but this year I notice the sunrise more often and think how luck we are to see so many of them.

I have appreciated the work and idiosyncrasies of our retired workers even when they are frustrating. They are so reliable but also so easy to forecast their next move.

I have also noticed the positive changes in our high school staff as 5 of the 6 are graduating from high school. We have been extremely lucky to have a great group of kids working with us. I am surprised how much they enjoy their summer jobs when I talk to their parents.



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What I actually do

The above description was put together by Adam Ikamas, CGCS, Executive Director of the Michigan Golf Course Superintendents Association. It is reprinted here with permission.

Perhaps it is just better to be in the golf industry when the weather is on your side and spring brings plenty of eager golfers.

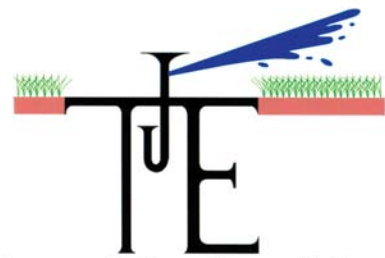
We do need to keep in mind budgets cannot be based on the best of years and there is plenty of opportunity for rain outs, extreme heat and disease pressure in the coming summer months.

Any positive revenue this year will be eaten up by previous years losses or the hopeful purchase of long needed capital improvements. The best years are the years to save for the future and educate yourself even more for future weather and revenue challenges.

I harp on the challenges of discounting in most issues because I think it is the biggest challenge the industry faces today. I can find 18 hole rounds with carts at many nice golf courses for under \$25 every day of the week with a little checking. For lesser golf courses \$18 to \$22 fees are common at select times reducing the perceived value of the round of golf.

Make an extra effort to enjoy the free sunrises we see almost every day and the nature and beauty that our golf courses offer us.

The WGCSA and WTA have some great events scheduled for the summer to network with your peers and pick up some great education. I hope to see you there.



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