

Chapter Delegates Meeting

By Jim VanHerwynen, Certified Golf Course Superintendent, South Hills Golf and Country Club

As your Chapter Delegate I was privileged to represent the WGCSA for the 20th annual GCSAA Chapter Delegates Meeting. The meeting convened at the GCSAA Headquarters in Lawrence Kansas and the Hilton Kansas City Airport on October 5-7. The GCSAA Board of Directors, 2013 board candidates and 79 delegates representing 82 of the 99 GCSAA's affiliated chapters, twenty six of which were first-time attendees, were there to participate.

The weekend is filled with numerous discussions on the state of the GCSAA and the value they give their members, the industry itself and an exceptional opportunity to voice the concerns of your affiliated chapter. It is an opportunity to get intimate with the Board of Directors from the GCSAA, the candidates for new directors and other Superintendents representing other chapters who share the same passion for our profession and the game of golf as you do. Ideas from previous meetings are revisited, new ideas arise continuously and recommendations for the future are brought up

for discussion and possible implementation as the meetings are very lively, open and candid.

During the weekend we were all reminded of the effort that is put forth on a constant basis to continually improve the GCSAA and the offerings to its members and strengthen the relationships with everyone associated with the golf course industry. This is done through outreach efforts with media coverage and public relations at many events throughout the United States and the Environmental Institute For Golf (EIFG). All of the other programs in place such as the Affiliation Agreement, the Professional Development Initiative (PDI), Golf Industry Show (GIS), Certification, Field Staff Representatives and Public Policy are reviewed and tweaked as needed with input at these meeting as well as ongoing recommendations from the membership throughout the year.

As your Chapter Delegate I encourage you to get involved. Ask questions when questions arise through your state chapter or di-

rectly with the GCSAA. Visit their website at www.GCSAA.org as there are numerous opportunities to get the answers you need, or the education you desire through free webcasts, online forums, IPM planning guides, and the EIFG to name a few. Please be advised that the GCSAA can be and many times is our voice on Capital Hill when issues arise and trust me if you have been paying attention to the news the last few years we need a voice stronger and louder than ever before moving forward.

Take advantage of the Field Staff Representative as that is what they are here for to listen and aid chapter members in any way they can. The bottom line is and what I took from the meetings is that the GCSAA is in the forefront of environmental stewardship and sustainability and as importantly securing our future through industry efforts to grow the game, strengthen the industry's position with lawmakers, create greater affiliations between members and the Environmental Institute for Golf so as to put positive perception in the public eye which as you know has become increasingly important. The GCSAA listens to our needs and is continually reinforcing engagement on the chapter level to give you the member value for your participation. Below is a summary of the information provided by the GCSAA of the Delegates Meeting.

Citing the considerable amount of dialogue among participants, GCSAA President Sandy Queen, CGCS, said the association's 2012 Chapter Delegates Meeting was productive and will pay additional dividends in the future.

"It is important that our members know the 'what' and 'why' of GCSAA efforts, but it is equally important that we hear what our members have to say," Queen said. "We cannot make decisions or shape policy without that feedback. That is why I am so pleased that there was debate on what was presented. I continue to be impressed with the quality of representatives the chapters send to the meeting."



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Queen noted that prior chapter delegate feedback helped formulate the new conference and show schedule, implement free GCSAA webcasts and restructure the annual meeting. Discussion this year will be utilized to “tweak” certain aspects of the Rounds 4 Research program, study the GCSAA Chapter Affiliation Agreement and help the board of directors and staff prioritize programs and services.

“The thing I like about the meeting is the board listens and wants our input,” said GCSAA Class A member Brad Joliff, a multi-year attendee from Oklahoma. “You get the opportunity to give your point of view. There is such a diversity of membership, and to make the best decisions the board needs input from many sources. The delegates meeting is a good way to get the information.”

Chapter affiliation deliberated

One of the most lively discussions regarded the GCSAA Chapter Affiliation Agreement, specifically Class A conformity between GCSAA and chapters in terms of membership classification. Ultimately, the board of directors opted to extend the current affiliation agreement to give the association and chapters an additional year to collect data and do further study on the issue.

The extension was also granted to give the association time to analyze the report of the Membership Standards Advisory Group. For the past nine months, this independent panel of members has been studying the impact of the professional development initiative (PDI) that resulted in the creation of membership standards. The MSAG presented to the delegates its findings that PDI had been successful with increased advocacy with policymakers, the creation of the IPM requirement, expanded education opportunities that were accessible and affordable, and improved playing conditions. It did note that the faltering economy and the cost and time necessary to affect change through a public relations campaign worked against the program.

Recommendations focused on membership conformity, simplifying membership classifications, and strengthening the requirements for Class A status and items to help market it.

Dues increase up for vote

The association presented a proposed dues increase that will be voted on at the annual meeting in February in San Diego. The vote will be to increase dues \$25 for Class A and SM members, and \$15 for Class C members, making annual dues \$365 and \$185, respectively. The increase is a combination of a \$15 increase (for Class A/SM) based on the Consumer Price Index and \$10 (for Class A/SM) to compensate for GCSAA's group life insurance premium being doubled by the provider.

The bottom line

GCSAA Chief Executive Officer Rhett Evans shared the association's invest-recover-grow strategy that has shaped the association's budgeting philosophy for the past two years. He described how funds have been invested in new programs such as field staff, Rounds 4 Research, web technology, advocacy and other areas to better serve the members. Giving time to allow these programs to gain traction will ultimately help stabilize association operations.


Evans indicated that staff will present a balanced budget to the board in December, but will pull some funds from the association's reserve just as it has done in the past. Among the new items in the budget will be funds to complete the filling of field staff, pay for headquarters facility improvements and add technology resources. The Mid-Atlantic and the Southeast regions are the remaining two regions without field staff. The facility improvement plan, announced earlier this fall, focuses on necessary structural repairs and enhancing the efficiency of the building. In all, expenses for the project are expected to be approximately \$1.9 million.

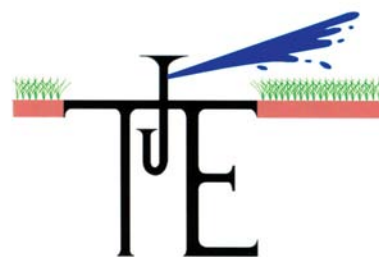
“We are by no

means out of the woods when it comes to our financial challenges,” Evans said. “Golf has had some struggles. But I believe we have been prudent in what we have done to weather the storm and are positioned for continued success.”

Tooting your horn

Among the more popular presentations were those that demonstrated how GCSAA resources were being used to advocate on behalf of members. Staff outlined the various government relations activities and the importance of members meeting with federal, state and local lawmakers to be heard on policy decisions. Various examples of GCSAA media placements on television, in print, on the web and on the radio were shared as well. Evans pointed out that NGF studies continue to place a premium on GCSAA members for their role in driving golfer satisfaction and facility success. He said that reaching out to key influencers such as employers, avid golfers and policy makers will continue to be a priority for the association.

The Chapter delegates will convene on February 7 at 2:30 p.m. for the association's annual meeting in San Diego, held in conjunction with the GCSAA Education Conference and Golf Industry Show. GCSAA members can view the meeting presentations online. 



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