

## GCSAA & WGCSA Boards Hold Joint Meeting

By Brett Grams, Chapter Manager, Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association

The WGCSA has always supported and enhanced the efforts of the GCSAA. From our earliest days in the 1930's when we were one of the earliest supporting chapters until present day where we are one of the larger affiliated chapters, our ideas, needs, and opinions have always been shared with those at the national level. As our industry has grown so has the impact of golf in Wisconsin. In the past 25 years golf has thrived in our state. Some of our facilities are now in the national

spotlight and on the rotation to host some of the largest championships in golf. Education remains true to our core as well since the days of the first green keeper training programs in Madison to the current OJ Noer Research Center WI clearly has done its fair share to advance our great game and profession in our 82 years of existence

The current President of the GCSAA, Sandy Queen, CGCS was aware of our impacts to the golf industry and that is one of the reasons he reached out

to then WGCSA President Brian Zimmerman several years ago in hopes that the 2012 GCSAA Fall Board meetings could be held in WI. It was decided that the meetings would occur in conjunction with the annual Wee One Foundation Golf Outing as this effort has grown from a regional fundraising effort to a national one in just a few short years.

The WGCSA helped organize two separate meetings with the GCSAA Board of Directors. The first meeting was held in down town Milwaukee on Friday Sept 14th. The leaders of the WGCSA were invited to attend along with the allied associations in our state. Invited leaders that attend were Joe Stadler from the WI Section of the PGA, Jeff Schwister from the Golf Course Owners of WI, Chad Ritterbusch of the American Society of Golf Course Architects were all able to join the GCSAA board and CEO Rhett Evans in a question and answer type meeting. The WGCSA was represented by Jeff Millies, Jon Canavan, Colin Seaberg, John Jensen and myself. The main goal was to learn about what is going well with golf in general and what are the ongoing challenges. The GCSAA board of directors are well aware that if our profession is to be strong and is to grow that the game of golf and the overall industry must grow and be strong as well. The agenda of this meeting was centered on what part the GCSAA and our profession can do to ensure golf has a strong future. We discussed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are on the horizon from the other association's perspective.

Two overall themes became evident in these discussions. The first is that the groundwork for cooperation has already been laid. The WI Golf Economic Impact Study is a good example of the type of work that we can accomplish when we combine our efforts. The second is that by all accounts all areas of the golf industry are struggling.



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## CHAPTER CONVERSATION


Whether you are a course owner, supply company, golf course architect, or a professional association in the industry we are all being challenged in new ways. The economy, increased golf facilities, and evolving industry standards are proving difficult for real growth at most levels. The meeting concluded without any real breakthroughs but everyone came away with multiple ideas that we can take back to our own members. We all agree we are stronger as a group because we are willing to work together.

The second meeting of the GCSAA Board visit came Monday September 17th. The WGCSA and GCSAA Board of Directors held a joint meeting. This meeting was not long in length but was valuable as both groups of leaders learned a lot more about each other. The GCSAA made it clear that they face challenges at the national level that it difficult to fund all the things that they want to. In the recent years the GCSAA has seen their annual budget go from 21 million dollars to the 15 million dollars this year. Staffing at headquarters has gone from a high of 122 employees down to 86. Decreased revenues, reductions in member numbers, and changes to revenue sources have

made funding all programs much more difficult. Like all of us the national efforts have had to focus on members first and outlying efforts second. The GCSAA leaders made it clear that they are considering several new programs and efforts to ensure our future is bright. They are in a constant state of review and improvement. The results of these changes can be seen if you look at this year's GIS and Conference schedule. They have listened to surveys and feedback trying to make the event as valuable as to the members while condensing the time frames to make time away considerably shorter than just a few years ago.

Our leaders also had a lot of time to discuss policies and impacts as it pertains to our membership. When national dues were discussed our leaders were clear that stated many people are paying both local and national dues out of pocket and increases in dues is a real burden and is at least partly attributable to decreased membership levels. The discussion of the EIFG efforts at the national level taking over the Carolina GCSA Rounds 4 Research efforts was also a talking point. The participation of other chapters continues to be strong and it appears the program is off

to an excellent start. Our WGCSA leaders have decided to continue the PAR4 Research efforts that were started here in WI three years ago for next season. This decision was based on the fact that we can conduct the auction on our own time frame that is best for us, that we can control all the revenues gained directly, and that in general it was felt that we did not want to abandon what is working well. The WGCSA will reevaluate our position after next spring's auction. The GCSAA leaders did request that we allow any WGCSA members that want to donate rounds to the EIFG R4R national auction to do so. In closing the GCSAA will be announcing some new efforts to promote research in ways that will allow the actual end users to help. The idea of the actual golfers that enjoy our game can help with revenue for research is being considered and will key on the Green movement that is a hot topic for almost all other industries today.

The challenges are real for all of us in our industry but with strong leadership and a willingness to join efforts to overcome challenges will make being a Golf Course Superintendent even better than it is now. 



Attending the Allied Association Meeting were Joe Stadler from the WI Section of the PGA, Jeff Schwister from the Golf Course Owners of WI, Chad Ritterbusch of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, WGCSA Representatives Jeff Millies, Brett Grams, Jon Canavan, Colin Seaberg and John Jensen along with GCSAA CEO Rhett Evans and GCSAA Board-members. The group held a question and answer type meeting.