

## The Calendar Flips

By Chad Harrington, Golf Course Superintendent, Autumn Ridge Golf Course

It is hard to believe that 2013 has come and gone, but the fresh start of a New Year is always a positive and exciting time. As I look at my own childhood I can't help but remember all of the milestones that came with every New Year and how some of them seem to be coming around for my Sons. I think back to what an astronomical event it was to become a teenager and how grown up I felt to finally be thirteen and not just one of those twelve year old tweeners. I now am going through the anxiety of watching my oldest son do just that. He realized that as the calendar changed the page; this was the year....the big teenaged year. I would like to be able to flip that calendar back a page or two, at home at least. It all moves way too fast.

As the WGCSA Calendar flips forward, I have a much different view. I like to look ahead at what our association has planned, what opportunities we can offer, and what we as an association can do to remain a viable cog in the golf industry. I have been doing a lot of thinking and asking questions to our members over the past couple of years about product and services that our association offers to the membership in hopes to be able to help expand the offerings that are the most popular.

I have also had similar conversations with other groups within the industry in an attempt to create new and exciting offerings that we do not already entertain as a benefit to our organization to give our members everything we can in a responsible manner. What I have found, I do not think would shock any of us. Overwhelming most of our membership said that they truly love getting *The Grass Roots* magazine and still like getting it in hard copy. It made them feel connected to what is going on. *The Grass Roots* has been a staple of our association for a long time and an example that other associations chase to compete with. Thank you to everyone that has contributed to this great periodical over the years. Your hard work is definitely appreciated by the

membership and is noticed by others outside of the association as well.

Obviously as great as *The Grass Roots* is, it was not the only thing that you as members have mentioned gave value in our association, but I will say some of them surprised me how often I heard them. The educational opportunities was something that was mentioned by near-

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ly everyone that I spoke with, but again what I think surprised me was the how many of you truly cherish the social time that goes with each of the educational opportunity. Networking seems to be something among every cross section of the WGCSA our members felt was a valuable benefit we offer. The ability to just have candid, non-commercial conversation with others that share the same interests and passions was a topic I heard over and over again. A goal and struggle as a board has been, how can we do more of what the membership requests, and get better, more diverse participation from the membership. We have many different offerings, different times of the year, and even in different areas of the state, but what seems to happen is that many of the same members attend most of the events.

Of course, we don't want to have those who have seen the benefits of attending such events not come, but we struggle to find a way to entice others who do not regularly attend realize the value they are missing out on by not attending, come to more of them. It may seem a bit cliché, but you can only get out of something

what you put in, and our goal is to try to get more of the membership to put in just a little more of themselves every year. We would love to see each member attend just one meeting every year.

Other topics of what our association does for us and the profession that some you felt was important was that we support turfgrass research. The WGCSA has a long tradition of supporting turfgrass research in Wisconsin, and with the inception of Par 4 Research, we have a long term, sustainable source of donated revenue to help fund research projects that pertinent to the turf industry in our state. We will again be donating over \$30,000 to Scholarships and Research in our State. I have also heard that some of you appreciated that branding effort we introduced in 2013. Many of the allied associations in Wisconsin have had logoed merchandise for some time and it was good to hear that some of you found the value of being able to wear WGCSA logoed apparel to your Board/Owner meetings like others associations do was a benefit to you. Thank you for the feedback. We also started an on time renewal system in 2013 that I heard numerous positive comment about and that is a two way street. I very happy that many of you enjoyed the new program, but I would also like to Thank You for utilizing it as we approach that time of year again.

There are many benefits some of you mentioned that I don't even think of as extras on a daily basis. Items like our Scholarship Program, Employment Services for companies looking to hire, as well as, individuals looking for positions, and something as simple as an easy to use directory. All of these things take time and effort, and it was nice to hear all of the positive comments from so many of you. Thank You for your membership in the WGCSA and we look forward to seeing and hearing from you in 2014. Good luck in the upcoming golf season, and enjoy the remainder of the off season. 