

## A Road Trip To Leadership Training At GCSAA Headquarters

By Brett Grams, Chapter Manager, WGCSA

In my time as Chapter Manager I have been able to take three WGCSA Vice Presidents to the GCSAA Chapter Leadership Symposium at GCSAA Headquarters in Lawrence, KS. My first trip was in 2010 with then incoming President Jeff Millies. The following year I was able to take our current President Chad Harrington. After a two year absence we again applied for the opportunity for me to take current Vice President Jim Van Herwynen.

I was glad to learn that we were accepted and quickly called Jim about the good news in December of last year. Jim then suggested a “road trip” as the 10 hour drive would be great as he had a few spots he wanted to show me along the way. I was curious but when he volunteered to drive I agreed.

As our trip itinerary was finalized over the past few months I learned that Jim was a serious “rail fan”. What is that you say? A rail fan is somebody who enjoys trains. Some people like to ride on them, others like to watch them from prime viewing areas often times photographing them. Jim is passionate fan of the latter. He suggested that we include a few stops along our way so he could show me a little about his hobby. I have always been curious about many things and what guy does not like 1000’s of horsepower and tons of

steel painted in all different colors. It was agreed Jim would create our travel route and plans; I would take care of the details of the symposium.

Our trip began early Monday March 10th; it was the first day that most of us in WI hit 50 degrees since November, excellent travel weather. I met Jim at his home in Fond du Lac and the brief tour of his basement had me convinced Jim really likes trains. Not only a “rail fan” Jim is also a part of the subset called “modlers” (people who enjoy model trains of all sizes). I was able to tour his latest winter project of the almost completed basement. Jim is building a large dedicated room just for his model trains. The walls are up and the track layout being crafted but I suspect the actual construction will have to wait until the end of this year’s growing season. Water and snacks packed and we were off.

Our first stop was in Rochelle, IL. Rochelle is truly a hub for trains and those who enjoy watching them. Double tracks from the Union Pacific and double tracks from the BNSF (both main lines all the way to west coast) cross here. This double track cross at the same grade is called a double diamond and is quite rare and allows for rail fans to view up to 100 trains daily. One of the world’s largest Intermodal Terminals is also just outside of Rochelle. Global III Terminal is Union

Pacific’s new and state of the art terminal is where over 3000 freight containers can be handled at this huge truck/train interchange each day. During our brief stop in Rochelle we witnessed several large freight trains and toured the quaint little park that is full of rail road history. Jim was a great tour guide and explained that this is one of his favorite spots and likes to go to the park several times each year if possible.

The warm sunny weather continued to improve as we entered into Iowa on I-88 then onto Des Moines via I-80 and then heading south into Kansas City on I-35. The traffic was light and the sight of grass even if it was brown was a nice thing to see. We made it to Lawrence without issue and temperatures at dusk were still warm enough that many of the Kansas University College Students were walking about in shorts and t-shirts.

The GCSAA provided us with a great room at the historic Eldridge Hotel. The historic hotel was a great place for us to meet up with other attendees of the symposium.

The 2014 Leadership Symposium began bright and early at GCSAA Headquarters. Each year 25 chapters and two leaders are able to attend the event. We all introduced ourselves and then were able to hear GCSAA CEO Rhett Evans briefly speak to the group.



WGCSA Vice President Jim Van Herwynen and the Kansas City Southern engine at KC Union Station



A Union Pacific Train passing through Rochelle, IL

Mr. Evans has been one of the driving forces in the recent initiatives to streamline and refocus the GCSAA efforts to its members. He provided us with a brief synopsis of the recent 2014 Golf Industry Show which showed increases in attendance and exhibitors. He also stated that one of his goals was to focus on Member Standards in 2014. GCSAA is reviewing membership classifications and standards that may be changed in the coming years. More will be addressed at the Chapter Delegates meeting this fall.

The rest of the morning was discussions on Communications and Social Media with an informative presentation by Adam Ikamas, CGCS of the Michigan GCSA, and then a breakout session where we broke into groups of elected chapter leaders and chapter executives. These sessions allowed for networking from chapter to chapter. I was able to meet some new

Chapter Execs and Jim was able to meet fellow future Presidents of the various chapters that were in attendance. Board of Director focus, governing issues, succession of leadership, and handling confrontation and conflict at the board level were some of the topics covered.

After lunch we were able to learn more about the focus and commitment of the EIFG. The Environmental Institute for Golf is GCSAA's philanthropic organization. Money raised by the EIFG provide many member benefits including funding of research throughout the country, education, scholarships, and industry advocacy. The EIFG is continuing to focus on building up the Rounds for Research Auction Fundraiser. This auction is very similar to our own Par 4 Research Auction but on a national scale. The auction is modeled so that golf rounds donated by a particular chapter are used to raise money

for that chapter with only a 10% fee being kept by the EIFG to cover overhead costs. Time will tell just how big this effort will become but as we know it can be a real benefit to raising needed research dollars for our universities.

We concluded the day with GCSAA Staffers presenting important information about chapter leadership. We learned about running efficient meetings, reviewing By-Laws, long term planning, financial management, and chapter operations. Jim and I came away with multiple ideas and topics that we can implement in our day to day operations that will make us better chapter leaders.

Tuesday evening we were the guests of John Miller, who is our Great Lakes Regional Field Staff representative. John took Jim and me along with several other chapter leaders in the Great Lakes Session to supper.

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Our conversation was a good one allowing all of us to ask questions and compare practices to other chapters in our region. Good food and great conversations was a nice way for us to end the day.

Wednesday morning we were able to hear from Mark Norman. Mr. Norman is an Organizational Leadership Expert and provided for a very engaging presentation. His emphasis was on motivating and providing chapter leaders ideas and suggestions to become the best leaders possible. His style was fast paced, and full of many good points and suggestions. Both Jim and I agreed this was the best session of the conference and we will be discussing how we can implement what we learned into our chapter's leadership efforts going forward.

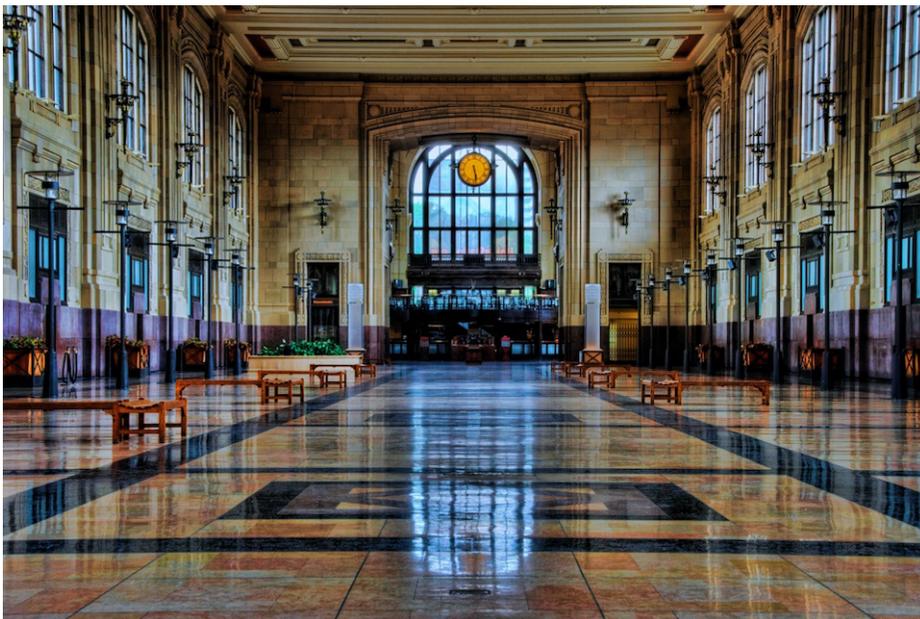
We concluded the Symposium on Wednesday morning by attending the Field Staff Panel Discussion. All of the regional Field Staff were able to provide their own perspective on chapter related issues. It was interesting for me to see that each Field Staff Member has differing styles and backgrounds. This makes for a very diverse group of people that provide key member services to all GCSAA members throughout the country. I enjoyed learning more from our John Miller our regional staffer but also getting to know some of the others as well. The Field Staff emphasis is going to continue to evolve and as chapter leaders we must take advantage of the services this talented group of people can provide. If you have not met John Miller

at one our monthly meetings (he attends several each year) or our Symposium please do so. I think you will agree he is a great source of knowledge on anything GCSAA related. The symposium ended with a box lunch and goodbyes to many of our new acquaintances and we were back on our way home.

Our trip home had us stopping Wednesday afternoon at the Union Station of Kansas City. The historic and beautiful building was once a major train station handling up to a million passengers a year. In the 1980's it was closed and fell into disrepair. The late 90's saw Kansas City restore the building to its prime and repurpose the area with various shops, events, and exhibits.



**A BNSF Train going through the Double Diamond Crossing in Rochelle, IL**



**Interior view of the Great Hall inside the Kansas City Union Station**

# GCSAA

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All the GCSAA Field Staff during our Round Table Discussion at GCSAA HQ

You can still catch a train as it is the stop for the KC Amtrak as well. We toured both the inside and outside of the building. This is a great spot for watching trains and also to view the fully restored Kansas City Southern Engine restored to its original glory. After Union Station, Jim took us to another of his train viewing hot spots. This time he took us to the “West Bottoms” of Kansas City. Several tracks bottleneck from six tracks down to two along the river before opening back up out of town which concentrates train traffic making it a great place for viewing the action. We headed north out of Kansas City ending up in Quincy, IL at night-fall just in time to view a train yard outside of town.

Thursday March 13th, we got an early start and went back into IA and up along the Mississippi River into Fort Madison where we crossed into IL using the BNSF owned toll bridge. This is a unique bridge owned by the rail road and is built to allow for car passage on the upper level for \$2.00 per car and trains on the lower level. Then we took a two lane highway 96 into Galesburg, IL where we were able to catch several more train areas. Jim explained the many types of locomotives, the paint schemes, and showed me several service yards. We were also able to see the Amtrak Train in town. Three and half hours later we arrived back in Fond du Lac.

The car rental was for four days and 1500 miles maximum, we travelled a total of 1438 miles. I was able to learn a lot at the symposium. I was exposed to some of the best areas to watch trains in the Midwest and certainly will think a little more about the rail road each time I hear or see a train. Most importantly I learned a lot about our future WGCSA President. Through our 20+ hours of conversation we shared a lot of ideas and information that will make his time as our leader more productive for all of our membership. As each of us heads into the busy growing season of our industry I hope you will consider making time next off season to do something that is a little out of the ordinary, something you have never done before. You learn and see many things on the road that we never do in those airplanes... I wonder how long it would take me to get to San Antonio next February? 



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