

### Couples Weekend Held at Saddle Ridge GC in Portage WI

By Brett Grams, Chapter Manager, WGCSA

The WGCSA couples weekend was held in Portage, WI on Friday and Saturday October 8th and 9th. Our host couple Seth Brogren and his wife Nicole did a great job of organizing a fun venue for the always fun hospitality gath-This year we all met at Shooters Sports Bar in Portage where attendees could catch up with old friends. Thanks to our generous Industry Partner Sponsors all guests again had a wonderful time. Once again the ladies held the traditional card games with the "crowning" of the Spoons Champion. I am honored to say that my wife Nancy was crowned with the travelling "Spoons Tiara".

Nancy has promised to keep it tucked away for safe keeping until next fall.

The annual golf outing was held on Saturday morning. The 9 hole alternate shot event was held Saddle Ridge GC in Portage. Host Superintendent Seth Brogren had his golf course in fine shape for early October. The fall colors were at peak and the weather warm and sunny. After the golf we all gathered at the clubhouse for a wonderful lunch and congratulated our hosts who won the event and are now in possession of the Mr. and Mrs. Moe trophy this year. Special thanks to our sponsors, Nicole Brogren and Lisa Bushman for making some great gift baskets and all of the attendees. Please consider bringing your spouse/significant other next year. We are always looking for hosts courses so let us know if you would be interested.

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#### WGCSA "Mr. and Mrs. Moe" Champions

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Seth and Nicole Brogren

2010



The Dinner Dance always provides a good time for the attendees!





The annual Spoons Competition. Notice the Spoons Tiara on Nancy Grams

Hosts and Winners the Coveted Mr. & Mrs. Mow Trophy Nicole and Seth Brogen



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### A Message from the Solicitor General

By Jake Schneider, Assistant Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

Thanks to all who attended the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Golf Fundraiser at Blackhawk on October 4. In a year when most budgets were cut or stagnant, it was refreshing to see 125 people supporting such a worthwhile cause. And, from a personal standpoint, the high attendance made all of the hard work that much more rewarding. Plus, it would've been slightly deflating if only 40 people signed up.

Naturally, that morning brought the hardest frost that we'd seen in Madison to that point, but our crew did a great job of getting a lot of work done in a short period of time. I've run a marathon before, and I'm pretty sure that I was more tired after walk-mowing approaches in world record time that day. Because of the (highly-organized) scramble that took place that morning, Chad and I didn't have time to visit with most attendees. but we hope that you enjoyed your round and the accompanying food. Despite the brisk start, it turned out to be pleasant early fall day, and between the burgers, brats, chicken wings, and ribs, it's safe to say that it was your own fault if you left hungry. Really, the only thing that was missing was my golf game, but that's nothing new.

What's new is the schedule for the 2011 PAR 4 Research auction: more on that later. I know what thinking, "Yes. vou're fundraiser talk. Why do I read this column again?" In last year's inaugural auction, your generous donations raised nearly \$8,700 for the Wisconsin Turfgrass Research Sustainability Fund. While my fellow PAR 4 committee members and I definitely consider the first year to be a success, we know that

the auction is capable of raising significantly more money. To those who donated to this year's auction, thank you, and we hope that you will be able to provide a donation for 2011 as well. If you weren't able to provide a contribution this year, please strongly consider donating to next year's auction.

Certainly, we understand that not all clubs are able to donate golf rounds and that some may have concerns with auction winners causing a ruckus at their course. However, after hearing of no problems in year one, it seems as if the auction appeals to die-hard, respectful golfers who simply use it to get discounted golf or to play at courses that are normally inaccessible.

Now, back to what's new for 2011. Most importantly, the auction dates have been moved up to April 1-10 to coincide with the Masters. This means that we will be hounding you for donations even earlier, and we're asking to have the donations by March 21, 2011. Yeah. that seems like it's a long time away, but we would love to see your donations as early as possible. The earlier they get in, the easier advertising becomes and the less we have to harass you. As you can see, lots and lots of early donations helps us all win.

That's enough soliciting for now. Have a good winter, and get those donations in. Ok, now I'm done (for the time being).





## Short Memory

By Bob Vavrek, Senior agronomist, USGA North Central Region Green Section

Losses of turf that ranged in severity from annoying to devastating have been the topic of numerous updates from every Green Section region this summer. The aftermath of intense disease activity, long periods of severe heat stress, flooding for some and drought for others is still visible and definitely front and center in the minds of many golfers and superintendents...well, at least for now. However, for those of us in the northern states, it won't be all that long before a serene, snuggly blanket of pure white snow covers all the ugly scars of this summer's turf carnage.

It would be great to put this difficult season completely behind us and look forward to a less stressful time. However, those who hold the purse strings need to be constantly reminded about turf maintenance issues while you prepare and submit the 2011 operating budget. Granted, money cannot magically transform a cool season grass into a warm season grass and there are times when you can cover the greens with \$100 bills and still lose turf due to extreme stress from heat or disease activity. On the other hand, deep budget cuts will definitely limit management options and make it difficult to address small turf issues before they become more serious problems.

Golfers, owners, committees, etc. tend to have short memories when it comes to unpleasant issues such as winter injury, summer stress, and disease activity. The best remedy for short memory syndrome is pictures...lots and lots of pictures. For less than \$100 you can find a very high quality digital camera that easily fits in a shirt pocket, so there is no excuse not to have the ability to document turf problems whenever they occur.

Before and after pictures provide the best bang for the buck. The advertising industry knows full well the value of before/after images or they would never be able to pitch hair transplants or weight loss programs as well as they do. A well conceived before and after image provides hope and encouragement that a problem can and will improve if a particular course of action is taken. Take full advantage of this concept throughout the process of having a maintenance budget approved by supporting your proposal with pictures.

Yet a picture is worth a 1000 words only if it is a good picture. There are not many professional photographers managing golf facilities, but you can still take serviceable pictures with a little practice. Here are a few tips regarding before and after images:

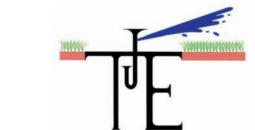
What is obvious to you in a picture may not be obvious to a golfer. Use arrows, circles, or whatever to highlight





Before and after pictures are useful for documenting dramatic changes made to a golf course, such as aggressive tree removal. Try to maintain the same perspective in both images to provide the most impact.

what you want others to see. Include a caption that clearly explains the problem and how it affects the course playability. For example, you may want to show a soil profile of a green that has excessive organic matter (OM) accumulation near the surface. Golfers could care less about how the OM clogs the pore spaces and hinders water movement through the green. But, tell them that excess OM is the reason why the greens stay mushy and bumpy after irrigation or that OM is the reason why the greens are peppered with deep pitted ball marks by 3 PM each day and you just may get approval for a new aerator or a new top-dressing unit as well as the time needed to perform these important operations.



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#### GREEN SECTION

Keep distractions, such as your shadow, out of the pictures and be aware of the background. You want the images to convey one idea, if possible. That said, you still need enough background in the image to identify the location of the problem to a player who is familiar with the course. You want players to relate to the problem in a way that makes it a personal issue. A close up of skunk damage on a fairway could be from any golf course unless there is enough background to identify the hole. You want golfers to see the problem not as an issue to "a" golf course, but as a problem on "my" golf course.

Frame before and after images carefully. A close up of winter injury next to a distant image of the site after recovery is worthless. The images need to be carbon copies of each other with respect to distance, angle and perspective. In fact, the problem you are trying to highlight should be the only difference between the two images. It will help if you keep a tree, bunker, or some other permanent course feature in the frame as a reference point, but don't make it the focal point of the image. You may be able to crop one image to approximate the size of another image using simple editing software.

Before/after images are often employed to document recovery of turf damage or to document changes made to the course, such as bunker renovation or tree removal. Be creative. For example, take a picture of a low area of the course during dry weather and compare it to the same site after heavy rainfall. This can be used to garner support for future drainage projects.

When in doubt, take many pictures and at least a few will be capable of supporting your point. Twenty digital images don't cost a cent more than one image. Keep the best and erase the rest.

On a final note, think about taking a short class regarding the basics of digital, point and shoot cameras this winter. Adult education night classes that only require a few hours of your time are inexpensive and can be found at most local high schools, universities, technical colleges and photography shops. No exams or quizzes and an opportunity to fine tune a skill you can use for the rest of your life. Best of all, these classes do not

require an expensive camera. Practice your photography skills and they will be a valuable ally in the fight against short memory syndrome.

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### Eastern Bluebirds, Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents

By Gary Gaard, Retired

The Author. Some Superintendents may remember me from a short stint at the Noer' Turf Disease Diagnostic Lab. In the mid 1990's my Department, Plant Pathology, had a retirement, a cancer, and a resignation in the turf program. I accepted the challenge of a short-term fill in, and worked with Dr Doug Maxwell who was also temporary until new staff could be hired. I had lab experience, but no field experience in turf other than home lawns.

In 1997 I placed 40 bluebird houses at University Ridge Golf Course (joined by cart path to the Noer), but had only four baby bluebirds. Now I pay particular attention to nest safety, equipment used, and the exact footprint of where bluebird houses are placed. In 2010 the same property fledged 200 baby bluebirds. With change such as additional houses at the Noer, the University's new Cross Country Trail, and continuing increase of the Eastern Bluebird population, I predict next year over 250 bluebirds fledged.

For a while my bluebird hobby got out of hand - I was spending 20hrs a week plus a couple thousand dollars a year for travel and materials. But I was increasing the bluebird population by 1,000 per year. I've cut back by finding other folks to care for several bluebird "trails".

In April 2006 I did a bluebird program at the WGCSA meeting at Lake Geneva, and have had several articles in Grass Roots. Currently I work part time for Aron Hogden at University Ridge assisting with wildlife habitat enhancement, culture of native plants, control of invasive weeds and trees, education, and the Audubon certification process.

#### Why bluebirds?

Indeed, some folks view anybody that tends birdhouses as a tree hugging loony. However there are good reasons for a golf course superintendent to have bluebird houses. You promote your course as wildlife habitat, and you're making a legitimate effort to re-establish a wild bird that for many years was hard-pressed just to survive. Maintenance staff is truly interested in natural events on the course - I monitor bluebird houses on several golf courses and there's always someone that announces "The bird man is here!" when I arrive and there's always someone who asks "How many bluebirds?" when I leave. Golfer' surveys find "natural sur-



Glenn O'Bear with the Iron Grandma of Bluebird Houses

roundings" as the second most popular reason for playing golf - for some golfers it's a real treat to see any wildlife, and the fact that you're doing a little extra may impress members and/or clientele. A trail of bluebird houses is an excellent way to promote citizen participation - for example, building houses could be an Eagle Scout or school project, or you could get local volunteers to maintain and monitor the houses. And finally, client, member, or community involvement is a fantastic way to showcase the diverse environment of a golf course.

#### **Information sources**

With Google and libraries you can get more (often false and/or irrelevant) information than you could ever digest. Start with the excellent home page of BRAW.org and link to the NABS site. Or contact Audubon International headquarters in Selkirk, NY, as they deal specifically with golf courses.

Here are some answers to Eastern Bluebird FAQs; diet is insect, winter is Texas and Mexico, a few stay the winter in Wisconsin, 4-5 eggs are blue (rarely eggs are white), incubation is two weeks, and egg hatch to fledge is just a little over two weeks. Contact me and we can chat or I'll give a personal tour of our work at University Ridge.

#### What to expect

Prairie Restoration experts have more prairie establishment success in sites that are "high and dry". Presettlement bluebirds nested in cavities, presumably

hollows in the oaks that survived fires in short grass prairies. So if your course is high and dry with savannah and Tall Fescue surrounds (Long View Golf) expect success with bluebirds, but if your course is low and wet (The Swamp Golf) with cattail and Reed Canary Grass expect only a few bluebird nests.

When I first had bluebird nests I viewed myself as a hero, as I felt I was doing something extremely difficult. Wrong - most golf courses are excellent bluebird habitat and with very basic understanding of house placement, design, and safety anyone can attract nesting bluebirds.

Bluebirds are territorial and the male will not tolerate another male in his territory. Audubon Society recommends three or more acres per house, so on nine holes you may have 5-7 good sites. Expect most of your houses to have bluebird nests sometime during the breeding season (late March to early September). If unsuccessful you have too many houses or the house is at an inferior site and should be moved. Bluebirds normally have two families in a breeding season. Don't expect just one nest per birdhouse per year - wrens, chickadees, and Tree Swallows also find the houses to be a fine place to raise a family. At University Ridge I average 1.75 nests of native birds per house per year.

Bluebird houses are not just for golf courses in the country. Urban courses can have excellent bluebird successes. I tend seven houses at Odana Municipal (Ray Shane city parks oversight and Jeff Jushka superintendent), which abuts the much traveled West Beltline Highway in urban Madison. This summer all seven houses had bluebird nests at the same time. In September and October the seven adult pairs plus their offspring gathered in small flocks to prepare for migration. Odana staff and clients saw flocks of 10 - 20 - or even 40 bluebirds.

#### How much labor is involved?

I check houses every 14 days during the breeding season. At University Ridge, I drive a cart past the houses several times a week and have enough experience to know, from a distance, if nests are normal. Sometimes I place houses as part of an experiment, or as a temporary check to see if the area can sustain more nests.

The folks from BRAW (Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin) monitor houses every week. This is fine for the accuracy and good vibes of Citizen Science. But it's twice as labor intensive as need be. After all, they're about gathering census numbers, not data for controlled and replicated experiments.

You don't have to do either census or science. But it is an absolute must to always remove nests as soon as the babies leave the nest. Old nests hold moisture. Blow fly lays eggs in wet bedding, and a second nest built on top of a first nest will have maggots that bite nestlings to fatality.

#### **Red flags**

Be sure, if someone gives or offers to build houses for you, that houses are safe and built to specifications (house design is over rated, significantly trumped by habitat) attractive to bluebirds. Really, the effort and time comes after houses are built - someone will have to place, maintain, and monitor. Or you could purchase assembled houses. I sell assembled houses for \$10, but you have to get the predator-proof pole - Menards for less than \$5. The last I saw BRAW was selling house with poles for \$40 at garden shows, but they may cut a deal or even have grant money for a golf course bluebird trail.

One person that took over one of my trails placed houses in mowed areas, including the front lawn. This is ill advised, as you are managing a golf course not a show case for bird houses. A reasonable number of houses (normally less than one house per hole) should be foot printed in roughs and out of play.

Golf courses developments with many homes often feed sparrows. Or the homes may have bluebird houses that either attract your bluebirds (congratulations to them) or breed House Sparrows. Sparrows compete with and may kill your bluebirds. If sparrows invade, evict any that try to nest!

Be aware throwing chickadees, wrens, and Tree Swallow nests (native species, compared to the invasive House Sparrow) in the bushes (to increase bluebird production) is a violation of federal law. Anyone monitoring houses on your course should know up front that you will report such actions to wildlife officials.

Volunteers may expect to use a cart and bring a friend(s). Decide if you want a team to monitor houses - tasks involved tend to work best if assigned to only one person. Finally, but very important, be sure volunteers are trained in golf etiquette and safety. Decide early and up front when it is acceptable for them to be on the course.

#### Glen at the Iron Grandma

This house is between 12 green and 13 tees at University Ridge. Iron Grandma is a Holstein dairy cow descriptor for long and exemplary milk production, and we call this site the Iron Grandma because it has fledged two nests (one year it had three) of bluebird every year since it was first placed 12 years ago. Fall 2010 we replaced the house (some would consider this house of obsolete design, but why change success?) with an identical one an older gentleman dropped at the front door of the Noer. According to Audra, he gifted four houses because "I just like to build bird houses".

Glen O'Bear is President of the UW-Madison Turf Club and interns at University Ridge. Ask him about surfing Lake Michigan on the only day in history that winds were higher than the day of the sinking of the Edmond Fitzgerald. I gave him the board with the entrance hole from the original Iron Grandma - long wear by baby bird toes inside the house wore half way through a 1" board.



## Fall Business Meeting

By Brett Grams, Chapter Manager, WGCSA

I hope the fall was successful for all of our member-ship. Challenges with the weather for 2010 seemed to be the norm this year. Thankfully the fall season allowed many of our states courses to recover and heal. I am confident that many of you are looking forward to a white blanket of snow and an end to the golfing season.

As our golf season winds down my role as WGCSA Chapter Manager kicks in to high gear. I have been working with our Board of Directors in planning for the Fall Meeting. A bylaw change was approved by the membership to create a Class C Assistants Committee. This new committee will allow representation at the board level for the current 66 Class C members of our association.

Normally the Board's officer positions change every two years but due to President Brian Zimmerman taking a job in Ohio he will be stepping down after this year. The pending changes to the board are a healthy transition for the association. However changes mean we will miss the services of some dedicated people. Brian will remain as Immediate Past President but Dustin Riley's long tenure of service to the WGCSA Board is now officially ending.

The election of officers and directors was held at the Fall Business Meeting on November 16th and the results are as follows.

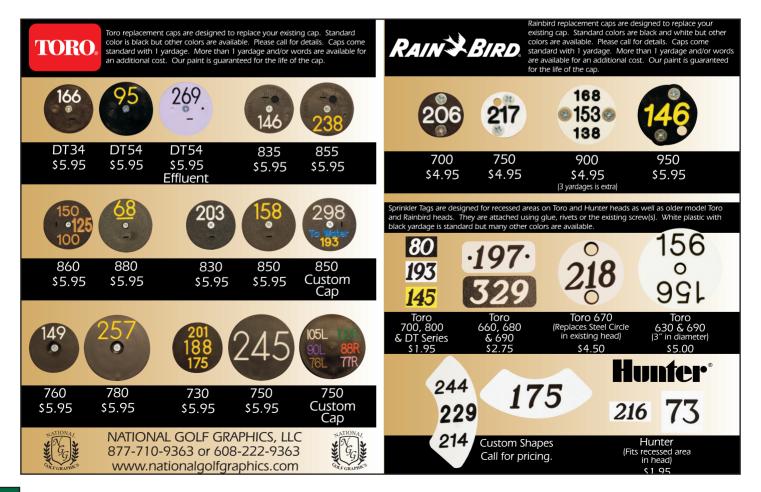
President - Jeff Millies, CGCS, Edgewood Golf Course Vice President - Chad Harrington, Autumn Ridge Golf Course

Treasurer - Jim Van Herwynen, CGCS, South Hills Golf & Country Club

Secretary - Mark Storby, Oneida Golf & Country Club

Director - Scott Bushman, Fox Valley Golf Club

Director - Jon Canavan, Milwaukee County Parks



#### CHAPTER CONVERSATION

Directors Colin Seaberg, Ozaukee Country Club and Scott Sann, CGCS, Greenwood Hills Country Club have one year remaining on their terms.

I want to personally thank the entire board for the hard work and dedication to our Association. The leadership, directives, and support I receive from the Board is outstanding. I look forward to even more success in the future. Along with elections we also will be approving our 2011 Budget. Thanks to prudent spending we were able to control many costs in 2010 which will help us with 2011.

The WGCSA has worked with GCSAA Travel to reserve a block of rooms at the Rosen Inn at Pointe Orlando. Rates are \$89.00 per night. This hotel was formerly the Quality Inn at Pointe Orlando and is still listed as such on the GIS Map. This hotel is #15 on the map.

The 3rd Annual Assistants Seminar is going to be held on Tuesday January 25th at Whispering Springs GC in Fond Du Lac, WI. More details will be announced in the coming weeks.

Our Scholarship and Research Funding will again remain similar with hopes of increasing the funding of University Wisconsin Research at higher levels with increased participation of the PAR4 Online Auction. The following S&R items were approved at the Fall Business Meeting.

JR Love Scholarship - \$1,500 Legacy Scholarship - \$1,500 Monroe S. Miller Literary Scholarship - \$1,000 TDL Donation - \$1,000 OJ Noer Research Foundation - \$8,000 Environmental Institute for Golf - \$500 UW Madison / Wisconsin Turfgrass Association - \$15,000

The approval of \$500 for the economic impact study highlighted in the July August issue of The Grass Roots was approved due to the Club Managers not coming through with their pledge of \$3,000.

I hope all of you are aware of the WGCSA's first PAR4 Online Auction efforts in 2010 was a great success. Planning is already underway for 2011. We have provided some general information already. We have moved the dates of the online auction to run during the week of the Masters. In addition, each member club/facility will have application forms and information provided with the membership renewal mailing which will go out in December. We hope to give each member more time to secure permissions and donations. In 2010 we raised over \$8,300.00 with approximately 30% of our member facilities participating. The PAR4 Committee is hopeful that we can increase participation and show even more support for our UW in 2011.

There are a few dates left for superintendents to show off their facility by hosting a golf and education



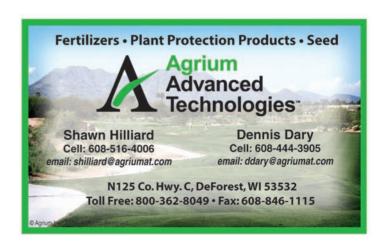
Past President Brian Zimmerman accepts the presidents plaque from President Elect Jeff Millies at the Fall Business Meeting.

meeting next season. Please contact us if you are interested.

As I mentioned you will also soon be getting your annual membership dues renewal forms. The forms will be similar to last year with ALL members needing to review contact information and updating any information necessary. A change for 2011 will be an actual INVOICE for your renewal. Updates to our records and record keeping now allow me to invoice members which will make it easier to record and track renewals and payments for all involved.

As always, please contact me with any questions you may have about the PAR4, membership renewal, Job Opportunities, or website issues. In addition if you are interested in hosting a meeting, have a suggestion for education topics or have other ideas to enhance our Association I would enjoy learning of them.

Thanks for being a valued member of the WGCSA.





## Everything in Its Own Time

By David Brandenburg, Golf Course Manager, Rolling Meadows Golf Course

It is an annoyance for golf course staffs that the leaves fall from the trees at different times. This year the ash went first in late September followed by the oak and hickory leaves in October with the maples hanging on until mid-November. Then sometime over the winter the willows will fall and be waiting for us in the spring.

The annoyance comes from the number of days employees need to work to clean up the leaves for playability of the course with blowers, mulchers and rakes. Special attention needs to be given to drain grates that seem to have a magnet for leaves to settle in and then cause flooding during rains.

One would think the high winds we had in October would have blown all the leaves away, but leaves seem to fall in their own time, not ours. Despite the technological advances humans have developed we really have no control over nature and its powerful forces.

We also have little control over the economy even though many leaders have a plan or theory to fix it. From an informal survey at the symposium, few in attendance have not seen their budgets reduced despite rising costs. The past few years a budget freeze is as good as a budget cut as it seems our costs are increasing greater than the rate of inflation.

Most operators agree there is an oversupply of golf courses but no one wants theirs to be the one who closes. Many daily fee operators are hanging on hoping for the economy to improve and golfers to take up the game in greater numbers. A few WGCSA members have been downsized right out of a job and even more are facing winter layoffs for the first time in their careers. Either of these situations bring on doubts of personal value to their clubs and concerns of financial and insurance problems for their families.

Near the end of summer it was clear our club needed to make additional substantial cuts in order to avoid additional borrowing. The advantage I have as a general manager is I get to make the recommendations where these cuts will be. At the same time the disadvantage to being the general manager is; I have to make the decision where the cuts will be.

My decision was to lay off our mechanic for a period of at least 16 months. It was a difficult decision but one that would have the least effect on course conditions and clubhouse service operations. No matter how hard the decision was for me, I cannot nor will not fully understand how hard it was for the employee I laid off. We can imagine thoughts of why me, what will I do and how will

I support my family, but until we are on the receiving end of that discussion, we will never understand.

It has been quite a few years since I have been involved in the day to day equipment maintenance as we will now be sharing the mechanics duties.. I don't mind the work, I am just not sure James and I will have the time to commit to it on a daily basis given the large property we maintain. Time may tell if my decision was the proper one but in the mind of our mechanic it will never be the right decision.

Congratulations to Sweetgrass Golf Course for being selected to host the LPGA's Futures Tour event June 20-26, 2011. John Holberton is the golf course superintendent of the 18 hole layout that was named to Golfweeks best new courses list in 2009.

The 2011 Futures Tour event is expected to have a purse of \$110,000 at the Paul Albanese designed 7,275 yard par 72 layout.

Congratulations to WGCSA Legacy Scholarship Winners Mikka Schaller Daughter of Scott and Joan, Haley Shaw daughter of Pat and Debbie and Alexandria Rodgers Daughter of Bill and Cindy.

Three \$500 scholarships are awarded each fall to children and grandchildren of WGCSA members whom are enrolled in a school of higher learning.

With widespread turf losses throughout the country this year you may want to consider ordering seed early this winter for next year. Sales in fall were brisk with some breeders running out of popular varieties which could affect spring seed prices.

Fertilizer prices could also be rising as Harry L Mathis, corporate director of materials for Lebanon suggests superintendents may want to order fertilizer early and pay close attention to the price of corn.

Mathis states "As corn goes, so goes nitrogen and as nitrogen goes, so go fertilizer prices." The U.S. Department of Agriculture's corn forecast, which was recently adjusted downward 3.6 percent, caused a ripple effect that likely will be felt at golf courses. The forecast sent corn futures soaring to near \$6 per bushel, a price that encourages farmers to plant more corn, which in turn, requires increased nutrients. The subsequent jump in worldwide demand for nitrogen increases