

State Retreat Sets Course For Future

By: Dave Davies, CGCS

During the last 30 years there have been efforts to unify the golf course superintendents in the State of California. The reasons varied but have always included improving our political voice and providing some element of social and professional interaction. During the last 5-7 years there has been another concentrated effort to unite. The purpose included all of the previous goals and a focused effort by a few to become more politically aware.

The current configuration of the California GCSA has six members. These members are the six affiliated GCSAA chapters in the state, Southern California, Northern California, Sierra Nevada, Central California, San Diego and Hi Ho Desert. Each chapter currently pays \$5 dues per paying member to belong to the State Association. On November 14, 15 representatives from each chapter along with our Association Manager met with a facilitator to work on a number of problems currently existing within the state organization. The experience was both challenging and rewarding. The representatives in attendance voiced common support for the process and the initial outcomes of the session. We were able to open new levels of communication between the chapters by breaking down some of the existing misconceptions and have pledged unified support to the improvement of communication with the state.

A current priority for the State Association is the continued financial support of a professional lobbying firm that will maintain a

watchful eye on the state government, notifying us of legislation that concerns our industry. The state hosts an annual meeting, educational program and golf tournament that promotes interaction within the profession. We are currently under contract with Adams Publishing for a statewide publication called California Fairways. Under the terms of the contract the State Association receives royalties from advertising revenues generated by the magazine. These royalties, along with our membership dues, pay for the services of our Association Manager and provide for membership in the BCSSA sponsored Platinum Tee Club. This membership allows us to participate in GCSAA's matching funds for research program. Additionally, participation in the State Association offers, strength in voting and a national influence not afforded to individual smaller chapters, sponsorship at the State Amateur Championship, annual donations to the chapter scholarship and research fund, a statewide job hotline, and finally, through the support of affiliate member donations a state hosted hospitality suite at the GCSAA conference.

The State Board is committed to expanding our influence within the industry on both a state and national level. It has developed an initial vision statement from which will come a mission statement to outline our future direction. Standard Operating Procedures are being drafted for standing committees to ensure consistency during the annual transition of new representatives. The final results of the session were a renewed enthusiasm for existing successes and a commitment to the enhancement of our professional standing in the future.

Golf Course Superintendents Create Real Fields of Dreams

Whether you live in a well-developed urban setting, a sprawling suburban tract or a small rural community, it's likely that many of the people you interact with are golf enthusiasts.

Those who enjoy the sport are aware of the key person at the golf course when it comes to providing a maximum enjoyment of the game. A recent survey by Golf Digest revealed that nearly 50 percent of its readers indicated the golf course superintendent as the most important individual at their facility. That figure surpassed combined selections of the golf professional, course champion, club house manager and beverage facility personnel.

The golf course superintendent is the professional entrusted with the management and maintenance of the course. It's a responsibility that has grown in importance during the past three decades as golfers have come to demand optimal conditions for playing the game.

Those heightened expectations have been largely fueled by expanding television coverage of professional golf events that highlight the nation's top courses. Also, budget limitations, unpredictable weather patterns, governmental regulations and increased participation all have an impact on the superintendents' operations.

"You won't find one member of the profession who doesn't say their career is a challenge," says Paul McGinnis, certified golf course superintendent and president of the GCSAA.

There was a time when a person could climb the career ladder from a maintenance crew member to staff assistant to superintendent through on-the-job training.

But the level of knowledge necessary to manage and maintain healthy turfgrass, administer large budgets and comply with environmental, safety and employee regulations has made education paramount. The vast majority of superintendents have two- or four-year degrees in either turfgrass science, agronomy or biology. This professional background is often supplemented with continuing education courses provided by organizations such as the GCSAA.

"I think most people get into this profession for two reasons," McGinnis says, "No. 1, many of us grew up on a golf course either as a worker or playing the game. And No. 2, superintendents have a love for the outdoors and environmental stewardship. We understand what it takes to manage a facility so that it is a benefit to the community."

Golf courses also are becoming outdoor classrooms for schools, civic groups and junior golf programs. It's not unusual for people to take to the course, not in search of birdies, but of animals, aquatic life, various plant species, composting projects and nature trails.

"The facilities not only offer recreation, but provide an environmental sanctuary to numerous plant and animal species," McGinnis says.

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