

Winter 2009

# Commonwealth Crier

News from the Virginia Golf Course Superintendents Association

## President's Message

*Happy New Year!!*

I hope this message finds everyone in good health as we begin 2009 and are finishing up the Holiday Season. I would like to wish each of you a successful New Year.

A lot has changed since my last message to you. We have the 42nd President of the United States, and the economy is in such a volatile mode right now it is absolute scary. The cost of goods (primarily fertilizers and petroleum-based products has been at record highs) is slowly coming down; however, most facilities across the U.S. are in such a conservative mode right now that expenditures are down ... way down. I have touched on this in previous articles but, communication is the key to any success at any facility.

The VGCSA Board has been busy the last couple of months. I recently attended the GCSAA Chapter Delegates meeting in New Orleans. The outcome of the meeting is posted on our website ([www.vgcsa.org](http://www.vgcsa.org)) and the GCSAA website. Please take a moment and peruse this article. This was my first time in the "Big Easy" and it is more than ready for our arrival in February—actually the City is extremely excited, as we met with several leaders in the community. During the Chapter Delegates Meeting, the delegates are given the opportunity to meet and speak with the 2009 Slate of Officers. All candidates are highly qualified and very professional. As we



prepare to vote on the Slate of Officers, please contact the GCSAA to make sure your voting status is up to date, so that our voice will be heard.

Negotiations are now complete for our 2nd Annual Joint Social Event with the MAAGCS. New this year is the inclusion of the Eastern Shore GCSA. The event will be a great time to catch up with longtime friends, network with industry peers and share some great food and drink. I hope to see you at the Astor Crowne Plaza in New Orleans, on Thursday evening, February 5, 2009!

In the last newsletter, the new Association Management software was discussed (Avecetra NetForum) and Mr. Norman has been busy learning the new system, and uploading our current databases. Members will be able to manage their own account easier, with a personalized login and password to keep membership information current. Online registration will become much easier, including annual dues payments. We are excited about the new services to come, and if you are not already receiving email notifications of events, it's because we don't have your email address—please send it to our Executive Director David Norman at [DNorman007@aol.com](mailto:DNorman007@aol.com).

At our November Board of Directors

Meeting, we accomplished several things. The primary goal for the meeting was to set the 2009 Budget. A conservative budget was voted on and approved.

Some exciting news, actually some VERY EXCITING NEWS is the adoption of several new Bylaw changes. The goal of the changes was to include two new board positions: Assistant and Vendor. These positions are one year, non-voting slots, elected by the External Vice Presidents. The most important thing is the voices and ideas of our future superintendents and suppliers will be heard at all Board meetings.

In closing I would like to take this opportunity to thank our 2008 Partners for all their support this year (Partners listed on page 4). Our Association relies heavily on this support and we as industry peers need to support those who support our Association. THANK YOU FROM THE VGCSA!

Eric D. Spurlock  
*President*  
Virginia GCSA



# VGCSA Installs New Board for 2009

## Four New Leaders to Bring Fresh Ideas

The VGCSA has installed a new Board of Directors for 2009, featuring some new faces to bring fresh ideas to help guide the future of the organization.

In 2008, the association approved Bylaws amendments, creating two new Board positions, one representing assistant superintendents and one representing associate members (vendors). The Nominating Committee considered many candidates, and this year's installment features John Libassi of Heritage Oaks Golf Club in Harrisonburg for the assistant superintendent position. For the associate position, Mark Merrick of Syngenta will serve, having just completed a stint on the

Board of the MAAGCS.

"We are very excited about the addition of these two Board slots," said VGCSA President Eric Spurlock. "Now the assistants and associate members will have a voice in all the activities of the VGCSA, and we welcome John and Mark to service."

Other new faces are External Vice Presidents Mike Mueller of Herndon Centennial GC in Reston (GWGCSA) and Ed Eagle of Ingleside Resort in Staunton (SVTA). Returning External VPs are Peter McDonough of Keswick Club (ODGCSA), Chris Petrelli of Cedar Point Country Club in Suffolk

(TTA) and Kim Garnett of Blacksburg Country Club (VTA).

The 2009 lineup of officers remains the same: Eric Spurlock of Hermitage Country Club in Manakin-Sabot as President, Jeff Berg of Goose Creek Golf Club in Leesburg as Vice President, Matt Boyce of Princess Anne Country Club in Virginia Beach as Secretary-Treasurer and Michael Oates of Winchester as Past President.

The Board gratefully recognizes departing Board members Steve Harris of Belmont Country Club and Stuart Scott of Heritage Oaks Golf Course for their outstanding service to the association.



## 2009 VGCSA Board of Directors

### VGCSA Officers

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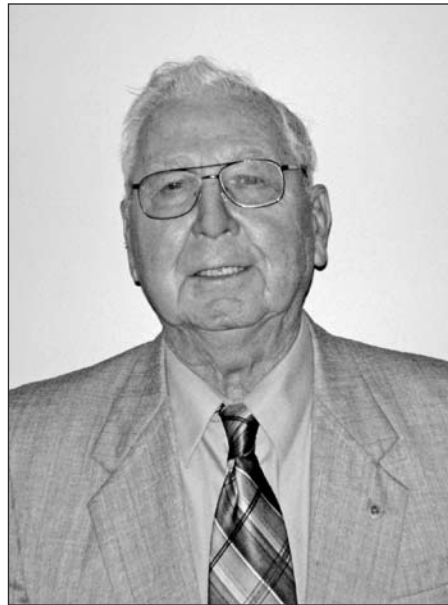
# Mike Burkholder Wins 2008 VGCSA President's Award

## Longtime SVTA Member Recognized for Lifetime Service

Longtime golf course superintendent Mike Burkholder of Star Tannery, VA has been named winner of the prestigious President's Award for Lifetime Service for 2008 by the Virginia Golf Course Superintendents Association. The award is given "in recognition of a career of distinguished and meritorious service and commitment to advancing the profession of golf course superintendent in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and in grateful appreciation for over twenty years of contributions that led to the advancement of association affairs since its inception."

Burkholder logged some 63 years in the profession, mostly in northern Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley. He grew up in the Fairfax County schools and entered the profession in 1941 at Fairfax Country Club as a part-timer in high school. That part-time job turned into a 20-year commitment to the club, and as his career advanced, he credited mentors Bill Glover and John Connolly for his "self taught" education. He also began a relationship with both the Middle Atlantic Association of Golf Course Superintendents and the GCSAA, both of which spanned over 50 years.

In 1961, he did a brief stint in Maryland at Manor Country Club, and the following year he went to Westwood Country Club, where he worked until 1964. From there it was five years at Reston, before moving over to Evergreen Country Club in Haymarket in 1969. He stayed there for eleven years, when



Spotswood Country Club in Harrisonburg sought his fine service. He distinguished himself there for nine years through 1989. His last club was the Shenalee in New Market, where he retired in 2003.

Burkholder was a leader in association affairs, including helping found the Shenandoah Valley Turfgrass Association twenty-six years ago and serving as its President. He was recognized by the SVTA for outstanding leadership in 1983-85, and in 2003 he received the SVTA's Lewis A. Lamp, Jr. Achievement Award, in recognition of dedication and service. He also received the Virginia Turfgrass Council Award for dedication to the improvement of the turf industry, and the VTC and VGCSA honored him as a life member.

Burkholder explained, "I began this profession part-time while attending high school in Fairfax, Virginia. At the time, this was just a job. However, over the years, this profession became my passion. Being able to work with nature and the outdoors, while enjoying the wonderful creation we have been given, which has given me a great appreciation of nature and wildlife. In support of this passion, I helped organize the Shenandoah Valley Turf Association with the hopes of instilling that same appreciation into others."

"I must have done something right over the past 60 years to be recognized for the Past President's Award for Lifetime Achievement. I am honored to receive these awards and appreciate the acknowledgement from my peers and friendships I have developed over the years," said Burkholder.

VGCSA President Eric Spurlock commented, "We are extremely proud to honor one of the great servants to golf and our profession in presenting this award to Mike Burkholder. Mike truly represents what is great and special about our profession, with his commitment and tremendous loyalty in an incredible career spanning over sixty years."

Mike married Virginia Moore in April, 1946, and they have two daughters, Paula and Charlotte, as well as two grandchildren, Michael and Ashley. Home is Star Tannery, Virginia.



## Welcome, Baby Chloe!

Matt Boyce (VGCSA Secretary/Treasurer, Princess Anne Country Club) and his wife Lindy welcomed Chloe Millie Boyce, their first child, on Saturday, November 22. Chloe was born at 7:38 a.m., weighed 6 lbs., 6 oz. and was 20" long. Congratulations, Matt and Lindy!

## 2008 Partner Program Participants – Thank You!

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# Bob Ruff Wins 2008 VGCSA Distinguished Service Award

## Roanoke Native Recognized for Outstanding Service

Veteran golf course superintendent Bob Ruff, CGCS of Williamsburg, VA has been named winner of the prestigious Distinguished Service Award for 2008 by the Virginia Golf Course Superintendents Association. The award is given “In recognition of distinguished and meritorious service as a member of the Virginia Golf Course Superintendents Association during the past year, and in grateful appreciation for unselfishly promoting the profession of golf course management, which led to the advancement of the association.”

Born and raised in Roanoke, Ruff got his start in the business working summers during high school for Buddy Crouch at Hidden Valley Country Club. He was a student at Ferrum College 1969-71, when Uncle Sam called for Vietnam service, whereupon he enlisted in the Navy to become a pilot. The end of the war allowed Ruff to return to school, transferring to Virginia Tech, earning a BS in Agronomy in 1973. During this time period, Ruff worked summers at Roanoke Country Club.

Upon receiving his degree, Roanoke CC elevated Ruff to Assistant Superintendent, and he remained there through 1975 under the tutelage of George Short. Then he got his break to be in charge, moving over the Chatmoss Country Club as Superintendent. He stayed there through 1978, when Wintergreen Resort came calling, hiring him for the longest tenure of his career, some 21 years. While at Wintergreen, Ruff helped build a name for the resort,



attracting the State Amateur, USGA qualifying rounds and other major events.

Ruff was aware of the spectacular Tom Fazio project, Two Rivers Country Club near Williamsburg in the late 1990s. This high profile project presented a great opportunity for Ruff, and he accepted the position of Superintendent in 1999. Two Rivers became one of the most successful golf developments in the state, and Ruff's care of the immaculate course has kept members and guests happy to this day. Just a year ago, Ruff was promoted to his current position of Director of Maintenance: Golf, Grounds and Clubhouse.

In 1981 Ruff earned his certification from GCSAA, and in 1983 he served as President of the Virginia Turfgrass Association (VTA) based in southwest Virginia. He was elected President of the Virginia Turfgrass Council (VTC) in 1984-85, later earning

the VTC's Presidents Award in 1986. That same year, he served as President of the Virginia Turfgrass Foundation. Over the years, he served on many committees for GCSAA.

Ruff credits his father, Robert Ruff, and Bill Keehne as the influences in his decision to get involved in the turf business. Buddy Crouch and George Short played a major role in his development and in understanding the role of the golf course superintendent.

Ruff remarked, “In some small way, I hope I have helped instilled my passion for the golf maintenance profession over my 34 years to the greatest bunch of assistants, peers, cohorts and friends. Virginia has been a great place to work and my colleagues have offered the support and caring required to survive in this sometimes difficult profession.”

Honored with the award, Ruff continued, “To the VSGCSA, my thanks for this honor, when so many others are rightfully due as well.” VGCSA President Eric Spurlock commented, “I have been amazed and impressed by Bob's continual efforts to support his fellow superintendents and mentor the up-and-coming superintendents of tomorrow. His contributions to the profession are truly immeasurable.”

Bob has been married for 34 years to his high school sweetheart, Susan, who kept encouraging when times were difficult on the job. They reside in Williamsburg and have two daughters, Emily and Katie—one Wahoo and one Hokie.

# Derik Cataldi is the 2008 VGCSA Scholarship Winner

Virginia Tech Senior Derik Cataldi of Gordonsville, VA has been named recipient of the prestigious 2008 Turfgrass Scholarship by the Virginia Golf Course Superintendents Association. The award is given annually to the top student in turf, who also upholds the high ideals of character representative of the profession of golf course superintendent.

Cataldi is a candidate for graduation in May, 2009, with a BS degree in CSES-Turf.

His 3.51 GPA is tops in the program. This past summer, Cataldi interned under Brian Vincel at Spring Creek Golf Club, which was named “Best New Daily Fee Course” in the nation by *Golf Digest* in 2007. Prior to that, Cataldi worked with John Childress at Shenandoah Crossing Golf Club, near his home. Cataldi will decide this semester whether to pursue his Masters degree under the tutelage of Dr. Erik Ervin.

“We are excited to honor such an

outstanding young man,” said VGCSA President Eric Spurlock “The future of the golf course maintenance profession remains bright, with candidates like Derik still pursuing our career path.”



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**Eligible organizations include:**  
 Virginia Golf Course Superintendents Association  
 Virginia Turfgrass Foundation  
 Virginia Turfgrass Council  
 Wee Ones Foundation  
 and many others



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# Read All About It – Upcoming Scholarship Opportunity Deadlines!

Applications can be found at [www.gcsaa.org](http://www.gcsaa.org) or [www.eifg.org](http://www.eifg.org). You may also contact Mischia Wright at [mwright@gcsaa.org](mailto:mwright@gcsaa.org) or 800-472-7878, ext. 4445.

## The Scotts Company Scholars Program

*Funded by The Scotts Company*

Applicants must be a college freshman, sophomore or junior or a graduating high school senior who has been accepted at an accredited university, college, or junior college for the next academic year. The primary goal of the program is to seek out promising students entering the golf course industry from diverse ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. This would include women and minorities. Applicants must be seeking a career in the green industry. Awards of \$500 are made to five finalists. Two winners receive \$2,500. The annual deadline is **March 1**.

## GCSAA Legacy Awards

*Funded by Syngenta Professional Products*

Knowing the costs of higher education will continue to rise, The Environmental Institute for Golf (formerly The GCSAA Foundation) developed this program to provide scholarship assistance to the children and grandchildren of GCSAA members who have been active Class A, Superintendent Members, Class C, Class A-Retired, Class B-Retired or Class AA members for five or more consecutive years. Honorees receive a \$1,500 award.

Applicants must be enrolled full time at an accredited institution of higher learning, or for high school seniors, they must have been accepted at such an institution for the next academic year. This program is funded by Syngenta Professional Products. The annual deadline is **April 15**.

Legacy award winners will be ineligible to apply the year following their win. Winners can reapply after a one year hiatus.

## GCSAA Student Essay Contest

This program awards scholarships totaling \$4,500 to applicants who are undergraduate and graduate students pursuing degrees in turfgrass science, agronomy or any other field related to golf course management. The original essays should be 7 to 12 pages in length.

The winning essay may be featured in the online version of GCM. The annual deadline is **March 31**.

## Par Aide's Joseph S. Garske Collegiate Grant Program

The goal of this program is to assist GCSAA members' children in funding their education at either an accredited college or trade school. It is available to the children of GCSAA members who have been an active member for five or more consecutive years. There are one to two \$2,500 awards bestowed annually. This award will be renewable for a second year. Applicant must be a graduating high school senior and be accepted at an institution of higher learning for the upcoming year. The annual deadline is **March 15**.

# 2009 VGCSA Local Association Presidents

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# News from Affiliated Chapters

## News from the GWGCSA

As I sit down to write this end of the year newsletter, I reflect on a season that actually was not too bad for a change in this area. Warmer than average winter temperatures last year kept the revenue stream flowing, ample spring rains kept the grass green and a “less than hateful” summer transitioned straight into winter. I’ve seen a whole lot worse.

Before I get started rambling on aimlessly, I would to take this opportunity to personally thank and recognize Steve Harris, CGCS, the outgoing External Vice President of the GWGCSA, for his last three years of dedication, time and effort in serving both the local and state associations. Your candor and easy-to-talk-to style will be greatly missed by all.

Of note from the golf side, the annual Superintendent-Assistant championship was held at Dominion Valley Country Club in October. A special thanks goes out to our speaker, Dage Blixt from the USDA, for his talk on goose control.

The golf course was in great condition. A little “home cookin” was involved as Ray Nash and Garrett Neville took the championship. Kudos goes out to Ray, Garrett, Adam and the entire staff at

Dominion Valley Country Club for a fine event.

November started out at the famed Robert Trent Jones Golf Club for a joint meeting with the Mid Atlantic Association of Golf Course Superintendents. The meeting was a great success, with over 100 people in attendance. With an association meeting this size, the list of individuals who deserve recognition for making this event happen is extremely long and I hope not to leave anyone out. Thanks goes out to Dr. Shawn Askew, Associate Professor at Virginia Tech, for his abbreviated talk on new weed management options for golf courses. Additionally, thanks also goes out to Theresa Baria from the MAAGCS for her tireless efforts in the coordination of this event.

And finally, saving the best for last, a great job goes out to Scott Furlong, CGCS, Glenn Smickley, CGCS, and the entire staff (there are too many to list) for an outstanding day. Everything was perfect, from the accommodations and the staff to the course condition and especially the food. Individual low gross

results were Corey Haney (76), Scott Cornwell (78) and David Norman (79). In a blind draw, low team net was won by Joe Herkalo, David Norman, Jeff Berg and Jimmy Rodgers (142).

We rounded out the season with our Annual Meeting at Evergreen Country Club. As usual, Dave Anderson, CGCS, and the entire staff must be thanked for yet another great event. That thing with the rock was perfect. On a cold and windy day, the team of Ray Finch, Barrett Evans, Chris Hall and Brian Dalschlager won the event. Of note, special recognition goes out to Josh Alpaugh from Chantilly National Golf and Country Club for his appointment as Assistant Superintendent Board Member of the GWGCSA.

Please mark your calendar for the January 12-15 VTC Annual Conference. See you in Fredericksburg.

*Jeff Van Fleet*  
*External Vice President*

## News from the VTA

Almost another year has gone. I’ve heard many stories of drought, and some where there was plenty of rain. Westlake in particular was very dry. We came through this year fine, and the grass has pretty much recovered by now.

I am looking forward to a great 2009. This was my last year as President of our association. The past two years have been great. We accomplished many things as an association. We gave out

four thousand-dollar scholarships to up and coming Superintendents. We held a unique bunker rebuilding meeting earlier this year in conjunction with the GCSAA. We are planning to give more money to the Virginia Turfgrass Foundation for research. Our attendance was up in 2008. We had over half of our meetings with 40 plus people—a trend that I hope continues.

I would also like to congratulate Kim Garnett, our next President. Kim has great plans for the upcoming year, and she needs all of our support!



*Dan Robertson*  
*VTA President*

# News from Affiliated Chapters

## TTA Update

Another year is in the books and I will predict that we will have a significant snowstorm in the Tidewater area this winter. Of course, I have been wrong before, but we look like we are headed for a harsh winter. Let's hope this doesn't lead to any winterkill. The past year was mostly uneventful; the weather was pretty good to us with some rain in July and a mild August.

This is the last newsletter I will write as TTA president. It has been a great two years and I am thankful for everyone's help. Travis Creech has been elected as the new president of the TTA and will do a fantastic job. I will remain on as the External Vice President for the VGCSA and represent the TTA, so you will be stuck reading my newsletter articles in the future. We have also elected Rob

Wilmans as Vice President and Charlie Womble will remain on as Secretary/Treasury. I have confidence that the association is in good hands.

Unfortunately, our annual meeting on November 13th at Bide-A-Wee Golf Club was rained out. We had a few brave souls that toughed it out for almost 9 holes, but the rain didn't let up. I want to thank Travis Creech for attempting to host the event.

The winner of the TTA's President's Award for 2008 is Phil Bailey. The work that Phil has done the past two years in coordinating the Wee One Foundation Tournament goes above and beyond what anyone would expect. This year the tournament netted around \$15,000. This amount, plus a matching contribution from the Wee One Foundation, was

donated to Bob Ruff. Phil has been involved with the TTA for several years and has served on our board a couple of years ago. He is a most deserving choice and we thank him for his service to the turf industry.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the VTC Conference in January and possibly New Orleans in February.



*Chris Petrelli  
TTA President  
Cedar Point Country Club*

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# When the Going Gets Tough ... **By Michael Guld**

You've heard all the headlines ... "rising gas prices, housing sales down, auto sales down, the escalating credit crunch, rising inflation, looming recession and possibility of stagflation." Not exactly the kind of news that makes you want jump out of bed in the morning, is it? So what do you do? You could just roll over and go back to sleep; however, when you wake up the problem will still be there.

Neither individuals nor businesses care whether the country is technically in a recession or not—a decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for two consecutive quarters or more—rather all they really care about is their pocketbooks and making a good living. Most businesses are, at a minimum, being affected by the slowdown and most individuals are, at the very least, uneasy about the potential fallout.

So how do we process all this stuff when the going gets tough? You may be familiar with the answer: "The tough get going!" This famous proverb, attributed to Joseph P. Kennedy, father of John F. Kennedy, could never be more applicable than it is today. Regardless of outside influences and mostly uncontrollable variables, you still have a business to run, a budget to make, employees or stockholders to support, bills to pay and a family counting on your success. Take the attitude that even in an economic slowdown, a number of people are still going to be in the market for the products or services that you offer ... and no one is going to satisfy their needs more than you. If there's going to be a recession, choose not to play.

So how do you put these words into action? Here's how ...

## **1. Live by the Serenity Prayer –**

"Accept the things you cannot change, have courage to change the things you can and the wisdom to know the difference." In business, the wind is either going to blow against your back or directly in your face, but rarely will it blow neutral. Remain calm and composed and keep sailing full force forward through stormy seas ahead.

## **2. Ignite the passion for what you do –**

Remember why you got into your given field and retain the enjoyment you have for the business. Passion creates positive energy, which ignites and excites, whereas stress creates negative energy, which deflates and fatigues. When you have a passion for what you do, you enjoy the process (your job) as much as the end result (your paycheck). And passion is contagious, lifting your staff, co-workers and customers and producing better results in the process.

## **3. Commit yourself to personal and professional goals –**

Dreams are all about "wanting, hoping and waiting for it to happen," whereas goals are dreams with a deadline. The two most self-defeating words in goal setting are "if only"; they provide a built in excuse. Write your goals down, visualize achieving these goals and live for them everyday.

**4. Have a plan –** "If you do not have a roadmap, any ole road will get you there." Make sure, when working towards the plan and on daily to-do tasks, the energy you exert has an economic benefit and gets you closer to your goal; otherwise it's wasted energy. Set mini goals with mini timelines and stay laser focused, ignoring the many distractions trying to sway you off track.

**5. Work the plan –** While having a positive attitude is important, only when coupled with positive activities will bring success. Your plan should include sales, marketing and PR components to attract the business that you deserve.

## **6. Refine and live your value proposition –**

In these days of hyper-competition, you have to have a USP (Unique Selling Proposition) that translates to a UBA (Unique Buying Advantage). If you're not unique, you can't compete. Know and promote your 3 Ds; what makes you drastically and distinctively different.

## **7. Provide a world-class customer experience –**

During tougher economic times, there is a tendency for buyers to become more price conscious in an effort to

save money. As competition increases and business slows, there is a knee-jerk reaction for businesses to reduce prices to match or beat the competition. Instead, focus on the unique value that you provide through an outstanding customer experience, with value-added benefits that customers and clients cannot receive anywhere else. Protect your turf by reinforcing the value that you provide before the competition out-positions or undersells you.

## **8. Focus on new business development –**

If per-account spending is affected by a slow down, expanding your customer base can make up the difference. There are others in your market who could be just as satisfied with your products, services and customer experience as your existing clientele are ... they just don't know it yet.

**9. Brand extend –** Consider new revenue sources that you can capitalize on within your business. Starbucks has been successful selling CDs, UPS stores selling greeting cards and Applebee's offering "Curbside to Go." What add-on products and services would be of interest to your existing clientele that could provide additional revenue without a lot of additional cost or additional effort?

While the above are important in any economic environment, they are imperative in tougher economic times. Business is cyclical, and those who dig deep to plant strong roots will not only survive the down cycle, but will thrive when the economy turns. Hunker down, get back to business and take back control of your destiny. You are in good hands ... your own!

*Michael Guld is an author, speaker, entrepreneur and radio commentator whose business development expertise lies in increasing sales performance, marketing exposure, employee productivity and creating a world-class service experience. He is the president of The Guld Resource Group and creator of "Talking Business with Michael Guld," airing on Central Virginia's Public Radio and heard at [www.talkingbiz.net](http://www.talkingbiz.net). He can be reached at (804) 360-3122 or at [michael.guld@guldresource.com](mailto:michael.guld@guldresource.com).*

# Virginia Agribusiness Council Announces Legislative Priorities for 2009

The Virginia Agribusiness Council plans to focus their legislative efforts in the 2009 Virginia General Assembly on four policy areas critical to the continued success of agriculture and forestry as the Commonwealth's number one industry:

- Agriculture Animal Policies;
- Eminent Domain/Property Rights;
- Environmental Stewardship;
- Funding for Virginia Cooperative Extension.

"I'm excited to announce our upcoming efforts as we continue to be a strong voice in support of Virginia agriculture and forestry, and ensure that our message resonates loudly and clearly with the legislature," stated Jim Saunders, Chairman of the Council Board of Directors and owner of Saunders Brothers in Piney River.

## Agricultural Animal Policies

Decision makers must continue to make common sense decisions regarding animal regulations, including animal care standards, animal health programs, and animal identification. Virginia animal agricultural producers and industry leaders

are committed to professional agricultural animal care. Programs such as the voluntary National Animal Identification System assist in managing animal health and disease outbreaks, protect commerce, and maintain a safe food supply.

## Eminent Domain/Property Rights

The Council and its partners will advocate for inclusion in the State Constitution Eminent Domain reforms enacted in 2007 to address the United States Supreme Court's "Kelo vs. City of New London" case ruling. Passage of this constitutional amendment will elevate the critical importance of property rights for all citizens of the Commonwealth.

## Environmental Stewardship

Sound, science-based environmental stewardship on agricultural and forestry operations in Virginia is a priority for the Council's members. Through the Partnership for Water Quality, the Council will continue to seek consistent and dedicated funding of agricultural best management practices, a public-private partnership between the agricultural industry and the state.

## Funding for Virginia Cooperative Extension

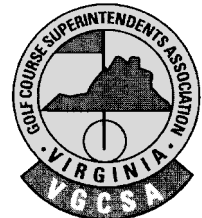
Programs through Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) and the Virginia Agricultural and Experiment Station (VAES) are essential in providing the latest information, research findings, and technologies to the agribusiness industry. State funding decisions for VCE and VAES must recognize that reductions cannot be offset by tuition increases.

The Virginia Agribusiness Council represents agricultural and forestry producers, suppliers, marketers, processors and commodity associations in the Commonwealth with a unified voice through its government affairs activities. The Council has a combined membership of over 40,000. For more information on the Virginia Agribusiness Council, visit [www.va-agribusiness.org](http://www.va-agribusiness.org).

For more information, contact Katie K. Frazier: (804) 643-3555 or [katie.agribusiness@att.net](mailto:katie.agribusiness@att.net)

*The VGCSA is a member of the Virginia Agribusiness Council and participates in the annual policy meeting on behalf of golf course superintendents in Virginia.*

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# Winter Project: Developing an Employee Handbook

## Purpose of the Employee Handbook

An employee handbook clearly communicates the behaviors expected by the employer of its employees.

- Employment policies and procedures
- Orientation information for new employees
- Legal obligations of employer and employee
- Responsibilities of employer and employee to each other

Don't try to cover every specific situation. Instead, use the handbook to convey general workplace conduct standards and expectations. Clear work standards will assist both managers and their subordinates.

## Below are some fairly universal considerations about putting together an employee handbook:

- **Keep it simple** – clearly written, well organized
- **Keep it current** – update policies every time regulations or business needs change
- **Pay attention to legalities** – monitor newspapers, professional magazines, etc.; remain current on employment law issues
- **Distinguish between companywide policies and job specifics** – typically, the handbook should contain companywide items and not get into job specific procedures
- **Control the distribution of the handbook** – have employees sign an acknowledgement of receiving and understanding the handbook.

DOs	DON'Ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do note that the handbook is a general source of information and is not "all inclusive"</li> <li>• Do include general policies that apply to all categories of employees</li> <li>• Do include a disclaimer that this version supersedes any previous handbook or unwritten policies</li> <li>• Do note that the handbook may be changed by the employer at any time</li> <li>• Do provide a copy to all employees</li> <li>• Do have legal review, and also seek guidance regarding any employment laws specific to your state that should be included in your handbook</li> <li>• Do get a signed acknowledgement of receipt from each employee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't make any promises that cannot be kept</li> <li>• Don't create a contract, expressed or implied</li> <li>• Don't guarantee employment for any definite period of time</li> <li>• Don't publish procedures you don't follow or can't enforce</li> <li>• Don't include statements that someone may construe as discriminatory</li> <li>• Don't make promises of severance pay upon termination</li> </ul>

Employers should ALWAYS have a handbook reviewed by an employment law attorney to ensure workplace issues are addressed in a lawful, professional and effective manner. Updates should also be reviewed by an attorney.

## An employee handbook may include (but is not limited to) the categories below:

Category	Sample Items
Introductory Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcoming Statement</li> <li>• EEO Statement</li> <li>• ADA Statement</li> <li>• Mission, Vision, Values</li> <li>• Ethics Statement</li> </ul>
Employment Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee categories</li> <li>• Transfers &amp; Promotions</li> <li>• Outside employment policy</li> </ul>
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payment of salary</li> <li>• Overtime pay</li> <li>• Employee Referral program</li> </ul>
Time Off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vacation, Sick, Personal Time</li> <li>• Holidays</li> <li>• Bereavement Leave</li> <li>• Jury Duty</li> <li>• Military Leave</li> <li>• Time off to Vote</li> </ul>
Employee Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health, Dental, Vision Insurance</li> <li>• Life Insurance</li> <li>• Disability Insurance</li> <li>• Retirement Plans</li> <li>• Workers' Compensation</li> </ul>
Other Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Drug &amp; Alcohol Abuse</li> <li>• Dress Attire Policy</li> <li>• Violence in the workplace</li> <li>• Harassment Policy</li> <li>• Electronic Communication Policy</li> <li>• Performance Management</li> <li>• Legal disclaimer</li> </ul>
Leaving the Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resignations</li> <li>• Dismissals</li> </ul>

To find out more on how to develop an Employee Handbook visit the U.S. Department of Labor website ([www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov)).

For information on a sample Employment Contract visit [www.gcsaa.org](http://www.gcsaa.org).

# VGCSA Annual Meeting and Awards Presentation

Fredericksburg Expo Center

Wednesday, January 14, 2009 • 3:15 pm

Please join us for the VGCSA Annual Meeting and Awards Presentation! The meeting is a special feature of the VTC Conference at the Fredericksburg Expo Center. VGCSA leaders will present the annual report to the Board, and the year's award winners will be honored. The meeting is set for 3:15 pm during the golf program on Wednesday, January 14, 2009.



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## USGA Regional Conference Set for February 24 at CCV

A regional green seminar conducted by the United States Association in cooperation with the Virginia Golf Course Superintendents Association (VGCSA). This seminar is for green committee members, golf course superintendents, assistant superintendents, club managers, golf course owners and operators, golf professionals, golf association officials and interested golfers. The program is presented free of charge.

Tuesday, February 24, 2009

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**Dress Code: Jacket Required, Tie Recommended**

### Schedule

- 11:00 Registration
- 12:00 Welcome and Introductions
- 12:15 **The Latest in Equipment Standards and Product Testing**  
John Spitzer, Assistant Technical Director, Equipment Testing, Golf House Test Center, Far Hills, New Jersey
- 1:00 **Why Have Nuisance Issues Become Major Management Problems?**  
Darin Bevard, Senior Agronomist, USGA Green Section, Glen Mills, Pennsylvania

- 1:30 **A View From the Forward Tees**  
Ann Guiberson, Director, East & Great Lakes Region, USGA Regional Affairs, Rochester, New York
- 2:15 **Break**  
Light drinks and snacks hosted by Virginia Golf Course Superintendents Association (VGCSA)
- 2:30 **Playability of the Sand or Player Ability**  
Keith Happ, Senior Agronomist, USGA Green Section, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- 3:00 **Preparing for the Coming Season: Never Forget the Basics**  
Stan Zontek, Director, Mid-Atlantic Region, USGA Green Section, Glen Mills, Pennsylvania
- 3:45 **Questions and Answers**
- 4:15 **Adjourn**

For Additional Information please contact Marti Zontek ([mzontek@usga.org](mailto:mzontek@usga.org)) at 610-558-9066 or Laura Niehaus at 412-341-5922 ([lniehaus@usga.org](mailto:lniehaus@usga.org)). CEU information will be provided at the meeting

Please register using the form enclosed with this newsletter, or online at <http://www.usga.org/register> using event code 22409.



# New Twist to 15th Chapter Delegates Meeting

## Delegates experience New Orleans; engage in discussions

Desiring to give members as much information as possible about the upcoming conference and show, GCSAA took its 2008 Chapter Delegates meeting to New Orleans, Oct. 24–26. A total of 97 of the 100 GCSAA affiliated chapters were represented.

“We knew there was some concern about New Orleans’ ability to host the conference and show,” GCSAA President David S. Downing II, CGCS said. “We felt the best way to address that was by hosting the delegates in New Orleans. Various association activities have been held there since Hurricane Katrina, so we were confident the delegates would be impressed by what they saw.”

Not only did the meeting break ranks by moving from its traditional Lawrence/Kansas City region, but it also included a two-hour tour of the city and a briefing from local officials on the recovery from storms during the past two years.

“I thought it was great that we got to see the city,” first time delegate Gary Myers, CGCS said. “I appreciate that we saw everything. There are still some areas that need to be rebuilt, but from the standpoint of attending Conference and Show, everything was fine. I did not hear any delegate say New Orleans would not be a good place for us. It should be a great event.”

The agenda for the meeting was developed by GCSAA Vice President Mark D. Kuhns, CGCS. His focus was on presenting a complete picture of New Orleans, providing in-depth discussion on Chapter Effectiveness and giving attendees a look at the future of the association. The meeting also afforded attendees to hear GCSAA Chief Executive Officer Mark Woodward address the delegates for the first time. Woodward, who took over in July, shared his vision for the association. He touched on the following topics:

- The importance of chapter effectiveness.
- The need for member engagement on the chapter and national level.

- Building relationships to advance the association and its members.
- GCSAA and The Environmental Institute for Golf’s role as a leader in ensuring golf’s compatibility with the environment.
- The role of the GCSAA member now and in the future.

Special attention was paid to sharing tactics with delegates how they could help their chapters to become more effective. A report on the extensive work of the Chapter Relations Committee, chaired by GCSAA Past President Tim O’Neill, CGCS was presented. The committee identified four key elements to enhancing chapters:

- Strategic Planning
- GCSAA Field Staff
- Executive Paid Leadership
- Sharing of Resources with other Chapters

Peggy Hoffman and Peter Houstle of Mariner Marketing and Management facilitated a session focused on chapter effectiveness that explored means to increase volunteer participation, enhance communications, activate memberships, improve management and engage in strategic planning, all on the chapter level. The key take-away was research indicates that more people volunteer if they are directly asked, and are offered opportunities that are ad hoc or short term in nature.

The delegates heard several presentations and engaged in discussions regarding member programs and services. Topics included:

- Industry efforts to grow the game, focusing on the role of GCSAA and its members.
- Membership growth and retention efforts.
- GCSAA’s financial picture.
- Marketing, outreach and advocacy activities.
- The importance of data for GCSAA

and member input, including member needs, assessment, compensation and benefits report, and golf course environmental profile project.

- GCSAA Education Conference and Golf Industry Show.

A staple of every delegates meeting, the opportunity to meet the candidates and discuss issues of importance was also conducted.

Based on the discussions, financial issues were leading area of interest. Downing, Woodward and GCSAA Managing Director of Finance Cam Oury presented the association’s financial picture as being strong with no debt, valuable assets and a solid cash reserve. Although revenues will be lower in 2008 than 2007, association leaders indicated expenses were being managed down appropriately. Delegates also asked for assistance in communicating issues during tough economic times. Staff will provide support to help members in this area regarding Conference and Show attendance and in sharing their value and the importance of golf course maintenance in light of budget cuts.

“I appreciate the delegates taking their personal time to meet in New Orleans,” Woodward said. We rely on them to be the conduit to chapters. We also need them to give us feedback. The one item that was very clear to me is that when member financial challenges are great, the opportunities and the need to assist our members are at their greatest. We live by the mantra that ‘Members Matter Most’ and I would contend they need us more than ever right now, and we need them as well because it is truly a partnership.”





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