



The GGEF Is Your Foundation: Will You Help It Grow?

By Mike Waldron
Chairman, GGEF • Executive Director, GSGA

The Georgia State Golf Association (GSGA) will soon celebrate the 50th anniversary of its first contribution of funds for research to help improve the playing conditions on golf courses for the benefit of golfers in Georgia. In 1959, the Association's board of directors authorized \$100 to go to the Tifton Research Experimental Grass Fund. The current Board has again approved to continue that tradition in 2009 with an annual \$10,000 contribution to the Georgia Golf Environmental Foundation (GGEF), the charitable research and education affiliate of the GGCSA.

Since 1959, the GSGA's research funds have been used to develop strands of bermudagrasses and bent-grasses that are better playing surfaces

than those of earlier years. Golf course superintendents have become more educated not only in the efficiency of maintenance practices but also in environmental stewardship.

The GGCSA has also evolved in the way it invests in research and education. In an effort to keep better watch over funds that were being contributed and the research being conducted with those funds, in 2004 the GGCSA created its own foundation, the GGEF.

Much time and study went into the planning for this endeavor. The GGEF was incorporated as a 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt entity, so that funds contributed to it are tax deductible for the individual donor. A set of bylaws was created, and a board of trustees (including

superintendents, representatives of other allied industry organizations in Georgia and those from outside the industry) was seated for the new organization. Wade Thomas, GCS (Idle Hour Club), one of Georgia's most influential and well-respected superintendents, was elected the first chair of the GGEF. It would be operated for charitable, educational and scientific purposes.

The board developed the following purposes for the GGEF:

- (1) The advancement of education and research in the field of turfgrass improvement and management;

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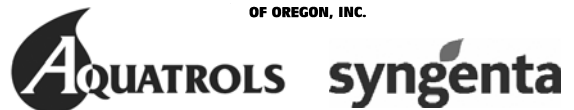
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- (2) The collection and dissemination of information;
- (3) Environmental protection; and
- (4) The promotion of public awareness and safety.

The GGEF raises funds through the allied golf associations in Georgia via solicitation of golf clubs and other groups, through GGCSA member superintendents, with an annual fund raising golf tournament and other methods.

The GGEF's board of trustees meets periodically and determines which research and educational projects it wishes to support. The most recent research projects that were approved for the 2008-09 year include:

- (1) An evaluation of the BMP program, in which 97% of GGCSA superintendents have participated, by

- Drs. Clint Waltz and Robert Carrow of the UGA Department of Crop and Soil Sciences; and
- (2) A joint funding effort of the GGEF and the Environmental Institute for Golf (GCSAA) to Dr. Qingguo (Jack) Huang of the UGA Department of Crop and Soil Sciences (Griffin) to study biodethatching.

At the GGCSA annual conference in October, Wade concluded his time as GGEF chairman after four years of dedicated service. His leadership was critical in these early days, and he promised to remain on the Board as past chairman to assist us with his expertise.

Now that we have the organization solidly in place, funding opportunities planned and research projects proposed, your organization feels comfortable turning over the leadership of the GGEF to me. I had said to Wade and Tenia Workman that I would only accept the role as long as I would con-

tinue to be surrounded by board members experienced in agronomic and turf management practices, and with other professionals such as vice-chair Tim Cunningham, Richard Staughton, Harold Franklin, Mike Crawford, Brad Owen and Randy Nichols.

As the next GGEF chairman, my goals are simple:

- (1) To continue to find good research projects that can aid the superintendent in his education and which can ultimately provide better playing surfaces for golfers; and
- (2) To continue to raise funds from a variety of interested and involved sources.

My challenge to the GGCSA membership is two-fold:

- (1) We can only provide funding for research projects if we find more funds to replace those that we spend. Please speak to your fellow GGEF board members or myself for help, if needed, in crafting an approach to your club boards or ownership groups to encourage their support of the GGEF. The beneficiaries are ultimately the golfers that they answer to at their clubs.
- (2) We need the input of the GGCSA members to determine the best research projects to fund. We need to hear from you! What do you think would help improve your knowledge and maintenance practices? Your suggestions will be reviewed by the experts, your fellow members on the board and others in the field to determine the best research topics that would benefit the membership at large.

The seeds of the GGEF are planted and growing. We need the dedicated care and maintenance of the GGCSA members to insure the foundation continues to flourish and thrive. ●



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