

The Georgia Golf Environmental Foundation: Promoting & Preserving the Game

BY WADE THOMAS

Have you heard about the Georgia Golf Environmental Foundation? The Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association (GGCSA) has its own foundation to help preserve the great game of golf. Formed on January 23, 2004, the purpose of the Georgia Golf Environmental Foundation (GGEF)

is to promote the advancement of education and research in the field of turfgrass improvement and management. Its focus is to raise funds for the golf industry and reinvest those funds for the good of the game.

The GGEF's first emphasis is on education. We help sponsor several scholarships for the golf industry, including the Georgia State Golf Foundation's Moncrief Scholarship program. This scholarship is specifically targeted for turfgrass and agronomy students at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton and the University of Georgia.

Two other parts of the educational goal of GGEF are 1) providing opportunities for the superintendent to learn more about environmental stewardship in order to balance that with improvements in his daily maintenance practices and 2) providing the superintendent with the tools to educate the public on environmental issues.

Most of the world thinks of golf courses as recreational havens when in fact they are also fantastic biological filters – producing oxygen out of their vast fairways, capturing airborne pollutants in their turf and minimizing erosion as turfgrass is one of the best erosion control applications available. Golf course superintendents are true environmentalists who, for their livelihood, must preserve the envi-



ronment. Cutting grass is the easy part of today's complicated standard operating procedure. I can't think of a better group of professionals to carry golf into the future with a grassroots approach.

The other focus of the GGEF is research. We are interested in any project that may improve the game of golf. Some topics that have already been studied include drought and salt-resistant cultivars of turfgrasses to be used on golf courses, superior putting green surfaces and cultural practices such as

the number of times putting greens should be aeri-fied per year to remain healthy. All of this work is ongoing, but we need much more research to ensure the future of golf. The Turf Team at the University of Georgia is one of the best research teams in the world. They have done amazing research throughout the last 60 years and, now, in the face of budget cuts, need our support more than ever to continue their turf-shattering research.

The Georgia Golf Environmental Foundation is a 501(c)(3) tax-deductible nonprofit organization. I am honored to chair the GGEF and to work with an outstanding board of trustees, listed at right. The GGEF is blessed to have such strong leadership and these people should be recognized for all they have done – and will continue to do – for golf.

The Georgia Golf Environmental Foundation is young but has already achieved many goals. Our fundraising avenues vary from individual, corporate and club donations to our own GGCSA Spring Classic golf tournament. Thanks again to the GSGA for their continued support of the Georgia Golf Environmental Foundation through donations! We welcome any help or ideas to aid us in the future. If you would like to participate at some level, please contact the GGCSA.

I would also like to thank Idle Hour Club's Board of Directors, membership and staff for continuing to support my efforts with the various state organizations with which I have been involved. This club understands the need to be progressive and preserve the game of golf. **GG**

Wade Thomas, GCS, of Idle Hour Club in Macon currently serves as chair of the Georgia Golf Environmental Foundation and is immediate past president of GGCSA.

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