

Green Start Academy Recap

By Marc Cousineau

Bayer and John Deere hosted the Green Start Academy for 50 assistant superintendents, including eight Canadians, in Raleigh, North Carolina in October, giving the ambitious turf managers a chance to network and learn from some of the industry's top professionals.

The three-day event started with a welcome dinner where attendees had a chance to get to know each other. Assistants from all corners of the U.S and Canada introduced themselves before sitting down to talk about everything from family vacations to the drainage on their courses over plates of shrimp, steak and vegetables.

Eight Canadians were chosen to make the trek south to attend the conference; Andrew Krek, (Dundas Valley Golf & Curling Club), Karen Rumohr (Edmonton Petroleum Golf & Country Club), Jordan Kitchen (Hamilton Golf & Country Club), Reg Langen (Richmond Hill Golf Club), Ken Rimmer (RiverBend Golf Community), Michael Gentry (Silver Lakes Golf and Country Club), Cameron Watt (Redwoods Golf Course) and Chad de Groot (Tower Ranch Golf Club).

The second day of the GSA started with a tour of the John Deere factory in Cary, North Carolina, where golf course equipment is welded, painted and assembled.

After the tour, the attendees were whisked off to the Bayer Development and Education Centre in Clayton, North Carolina. Chris Dew, superintendent at The National Golf Club and a CGSA member, gave the first presentation. Dew discussed how to get the best from your team as a golf course manager.

The assistant superintendents were then split into smaller break-out groups to discuss management techniques and issues to cap off the morning.

After lunch, attendees took in two more presentations, including one by Bryan Stromme (Billy Casper Golf) and Chris Condon (Superintendent at Tetherow Golf Club) about budgeting and another by Bob Farren (Pinehurst Resort) on cultivating business relationships. After the presentations, attendees were given a tour of the Bayer facility (including a new bee health initiative) and had a chance to test their golfing acumen on a five-hole "course" which included a footgolf hole and a bunker challenge.

The third and final day of the GSA was held at the John Deere offices in Cary and was all about getting that coveted superintendent job. Carol Rau, a career consultant specializing in the golf industry, started the morning by talking about ways to stand out while on the job hunt. Her talk was followed by another break-out session where the assistants were able to discuss their experiences with writing resumes, applying to jobs and going through the interview process.

Jeff Corcoran, from Oak Hill Country Club, gave the last talk of the morning. Corcoran discussed the right way to prepare for your dream job and how to keep it.

The GSA was wrapped up by Ed Ibarguen and Billy Weekes from Duke University Golf Club and their presentation on finding the perfect fit for your next job.

As the Green Start Academy came to an end, it was apparent that the experience would stay with all the attendees for a long time to come. Assistants from all over the U.S and Canada had heard from some of the most successful people in the industry and connected with them, whether it was sitting down to lunch or riding in a bus together. The attendees were urged to take what they learned at the GSA and apply it to their operations, even after all the business cards were exchanged and notebooks closed. I think it's safe to say that this advice is being acted upon by all the attendees at this very moment.

I'd like to thank Bayer and John Deere for giving me and the CGSA a chance to attend the 2014 Green Start Academy. It was truly an honour to observe the future of the golf course management industry in action. Look for a more in-depth piece about the Green Start Academy and the experiences of the eight Canadian attendees in the January/February issue of GreenMaster.