

# Turf's Up in the Inland Empire



Winter 2023/2024

## Improve Conditions and Save Money?

Investing so little financially by attending our educational events may pay off tomorrow, if not today! Take this opportunity and join us March 11 & 12, 2024 at the Yakima Country Club — a new location for the Spring Meeting to experience! More importantly than enjoying a different property will be the educational offerings benefiting your facility and making the road trip worthwhile. It is our goal with our events to address relevant topics, current research and innovative thinking to help you always provide the best playing conditions possible for your budget. Our host superintendent is Mitchell Larson.

This will be a first-time visit for one of our presenters, Wendell Hutchens, Ph.D., who was selected as the 2023 Award of Excellence recipient from the Musser International Turfgrass Foundation for demonstrating overall excellence throughout his doctoral program in turfgrass research. The foundation's president, Frank Dobie, shared *"The standards are very rigorous for the doctoral candidates who seek the award, so all of the applicants are of the highest caliber. We strive to select the one candidate that we feel is the best of the best and, this year, that was Dr. Hutchens."*

Hutchens is an assistant professor of turfgrass science in the horticulture department at the University of Arkansas. His main areas of expertise are turfgrass pathology and precision management of turfgrass pests using emerging technologies.

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*"Navigating the Challenges of Managing Root Diseases"*

*"Fungicide Alternatives for Disease Control in Turfgrass"*

*"Using Emerging Technologies to Map and Manage Turfgrass Pests"*

## Donation of Rounds!

Mike Kinglsey, retired superintendent and present chapter hero, is reaching out to our superintendents for the annual donation of rounds. Please respond to Mike or, more importantly, even reach out to him first! (509) 900-8843. All contributions are greatly appreciated and we thank you for your participation.

## Seeking a Site for the 2024 Summer Outing

Are you interested in hosting the Inland Empire GCSA Summer Outing? Contact Lori or a board member. It is that simple!

## Research Information Available to NTA Members

The Northwest Turfgrass Association has donated more than \$60,000 toward turfgrass research in 2023, and updates on some of those university research projects are now available for NTA members. Presentations were made at the 2023 NTA annual conference at the Pronghorn Club near Bend, Ore., with updates on research being conducted at both Oregon State University and Washington State University. Visit the NTA site for the links for the following:

- Long-term effects of topdressing and cultivation practices on annual bluegrass putting greens Dr. Chas Schmid, OSU
- Plant-growth regulators research at OSU—Dr. Chas Schmid, OSU
- Understanding Pacific Northwest turfgrass plant-parasitic nematode communities to improve management strategies—Hannah Rivedal, USDA-ARS and Emily Braitwaite, OSU
- Evaluation of the application of gibberellic acid on Kentucky bluegrass and creeping bentgrass turf restoration—Dr. Michael Neff, WSU

The Northwest Turfgrass Association, in its 78th year, is accepting applications for its turfgrass research grants for 2024.



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## A Different Kind of Year

**Ivan Gibbs, Superintendent**  
**Leavenworth Golf Club, Leavenworth, Wash.**

It is amazing to me how different each golf season can be. Some years there is a major focus on projects or renovations. Other years the weather forces us to hold on for the ride and try not to lose any turf through the heat. This year, for me, my focus was at home. In March, my wife was diagnosed with breast cancer for the second time. Dealing with this has helped me gain some perspective, especially in my career. I was forced to prioritize more than ever, and my club supported every one of my decisions.

My wife, Randi, and I have been married for 12 years. Her first cancer diagnosis came 19 years ago when she was 27, before I was in her life. Luckily, her annual MRI spotted this tumor while it was small, which means she didn't need chemo or radiation like she did the first time. We decided that the cancer diagnosis was not going to take away our long-made plans to travel in April. Randi took her trip to Costa Rica while I went to the Masters with fellow superintendents, Geoff Haynes and Brandon Bubar. This travel set us up for the long road ahead, recovering from a mastectomy and reconstructive surgery. I needed a lot of support from my staff for the weeks of work I missed over the course of the summer while caring for Randi. At one point we found ourselves in a five-day unexpected UW hospital stay and my staff didn't miss a beat.

There is something to be said about having a consistent crew. Most of our staff

return every season, even though we can only employ them for seven-eight months. We have a small maintenance crew with six guys under me. Everyone can do just about every job on the course. They are dedicated to this golf course, which showed more than ever this year in my absence. They are like family to me.

In July, I had irrigation pump issues. One of my two main 40hp pumps would not stay on for the overnight water cycle. I spent the better part of the week tweaking the timers, pressure switches, and relays only making the problem worse. Finally, I had a company come in that talked me into a \$40,000 upgrade versus chasing the gremlin. They installed Variable Frequency Drives in place of my antiquated 35-year-old control panel. Draining the irrigation system in the middle of July was mentally difficult. Scary is probably a better word for it. Alas, two days later we fired the system back up and found the pressure and responsiveness much improved. We definitely lost some turf from poor coverage and the system being down for two days.

In August, I found myself in a contract negotiation. I kept thinking to myself, too bad the negotiation wasn't last year when I really had the golf course dialed. I was worried that my time away was going to hinder me; that was not the case. My

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## Different Kind of Year

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board took everything into account, including the GCSAA Compensation Report and my 19 consecutive years of employment. At the end of the day, I didn't have to fight very hard. The compensation survey did that for me and they brought my salary up to parallel facility averages. I felt recognized and appreciated. This was one of the hardest years of my life and my club showed its support for me.

September and October were loaded with days of pleasant weather. It was nice to see recovery in some of the turf we lost during the irrigation debacle in July. The parking lot was full most of the fall and we finished strong. My wife and I took a trip to Rome for the Ryder Cup. This was the perfect way to celebrate her health. If you are wondering, she is the one who joined the lottery and bought the tickets. This was her idea to watch a golf event on foreign soil; how awesome is that?!

It is amazing how much better I feel about my year after the IEGCSA fall meeting. The comradery is important to me being on the edge of our territory; Leavenworth is a long way from everywhere. I feel like I can wrap my season with gratitude, however difficult it may have been. I find myself grateful for a loving wife, supportive staff, and stable career. I am really looking forward to next season.

## Spring Meeting continued from page 1

Hutchens' research program is centered around maintaining healthy turfgrass and combating turfgrass diseases with traditional cultural and chemical practices as well as with cutting-edge new technology such as drones and GPS-guided sprayers.

Leah Brilman, Ph.D., has dedicated her



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Arizona. A turfgrass breeder who focuses on breeding turfgrass cultivars with reduced inputs, Brilman's one of many distinguished recognition awards includes the 2018 Distinguished Service Award from GCSAA. In addition to serving various organizations throughout her career, she has developed and administered undergraduate contests for turf students for both the GCSAA (Turf Bowl) and SFMA (Student Challenge).

Bill Griffith continues to be an important resource for our association, even in his retirement. Griffith was the director for the Agriculture Center of Excellence from 2013 until his retirement in December, 2017. Prior, for 20 years Griffith was the instructor and program coordinator of Walla Walla Community College's long-running and successful Turf Management program. Griffith has 15 years of direct industry experience as a golf course superintendent at courses in Oregon and Washington. He has led many professional organizations and boards serving golf courses over the past 35 years. Griffith served on the Inland Empire GCSA Board of Directors for 25 years and is a past

career to turf research and is product manager for DLF USA /Seed Research of Oregon, a part of DLF. She received a B.S. degree in biology from California State University Bakersfield, and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in agronomy and plant genetics from the University of



*"It's all About the People"*

In conjunction with the event enjoy golf at the beautiful Yakima Country Club and our annual silent auction. Have a donation? Contact Mike Bednar or Mike Kingsley.



**Greg Baer**

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# Strategic Plan

## November 12, 2023

**Shane Hughes, Planet Turf**  
**Allied Partner Board Member**

What is a strategic plan, why is it important to our chapter, who does it benefit and how can you be further involved? All good questions and you've come to the right place for review!

**WHAT** – Every few years, as deemed necessary by our IEGCSA Board of Directors, a strategic planning session is scheduled with the GCSAA. Previous sessions took place in 2007, 2013 and 2016. Think of these sessions as a 'checkup' for our chapter. All this takes place in person over the course of around three hours with input from your IEGCSA Board of Directors as well as our exceptional executive director, Lori Russell. Facilitating this session was GCSAA's Director of Chapter Outreach, Steve Randall, and our GCSAA Northwest Regional Representative, David Phipps. During the meeting, general expectations of the session are defined, big goals are announced, a SCO analysis is performed (strengths, challenges, opportunities), the mission statement is reviewed and action items are established.

**WHY** – This strategic plan, quite simply, takes the pulse of our chapter and directs our vision. Our chapter's mission statement, "The IEGCSA is established to serve members, advance the profession, and promote the enjoyment of golf through responsible golf course management practices," aligns with the importance of this session. We need to periodically measure our strengths and overcome our challenges to provide the best experience for our members.

**Some of our strengths** — our executive director, Lori, our member attendance in a large geographic area, high-value events with quality education and member retention.

**Some of our weaknesses** — conference inflation, our large geographic area and finding members to engage on the board level.

**Some of our opportunities** — one-on-one peer conversations with engagement, expanding our social media presence, communicating IEGCSA's value to our members and building a sustainable financial model to further support our growing industry locally.

**WHO** – All this is executed with support from GCSAA, our executive director and your IEGCSA Board of Directors to benefit you!



How can our chapter further engage and enhance your member experience? How can our chapter further promote the value of GCSAA and share insights gleaned from a national perspective to our local level? These topics, as well as many others, are the underlying message relayed throughout our session. All of which are member centered.

**HOW** — Want to review the entire 2023 session or previous sessions and be further involved? I encourage you to go to [iegcsa.org](http://iegcsa.org), click on the "Member Area" tab and scroll down to the "SOPs and Strategic Planning" bullet. Here, you will find some great information and be able to review the work your IEGCSA Board of Directors is performing to better our chapter.

Also, I highly recommend you become more involved if this article and/or information excites you! I've been on your board in the Secretary/Treasurer position and currently am honored to be your allied partner board representative. Being involved, making positive change, and establishing a legacy within our profession are all attributes our industry needs more of. Are you up for the call?

**Thank you to Dan Frederiksen for moderating the Round Table Discussion!**



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**Richard Strautman**  
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# Inland Empire GCSA Fall Meeting & Trade Show

## November 2023



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# Staffing Stresses

Jacob Wilson, Equipment Manager  
Stock Farm Golf Club, Hamilton, Mont.  
*The Perfect Lie, November 2023*

This year I noticed the headaches of being short-staffed more so than any other year. During our playing season, we were six people short of where we normally are. This, added to the staff being responsible for event setup, preparing the course for tournaments, and carrying out daily operations and projects became cumbersome at times. Although I may be a mechanic now and do not hire and fire employees, being short-staffed affected my daily operations as well as the daily operations of other coworkers. I don't believe that the issue of short staffing is strictly related to people not wanting to work. I believe that it is related to people not wanting to do physical work.

If you think about it, we are now at an age where people can post pictures of their feet and somehow make money from this. Apparently other options include posting a video of yourself playing a video game on YouTube and receiving money from doing this. The ability to do this affects all employers that require people to leave their house in the morning and head to a work place to do their job, whether it is working on a golf course, or working at McDonalds. How much an employer can pay their employee will always be a factor when competing with other businesses for hiring employees. But, I no longer believe that it is the driving factor. People not wanting to do physical labor seems to be the driving factor for staffing issues. Not a lot of people enjoy waking

up before the sun to work for eight hours in the heat or cold.

Noticing this helps me understand why autonomous mowers are being pushed to replace mowers driven by people. There was a time when the thought of autonomous mowers was frustrating to me. To me it was taking jobs away from people, but now seeing what people are doing to make money helps me to understand why the industry is moving this way. It's easier to press a button on a machine to have it start mowing than it is to try and find people to work.

Noticing the current trends of the workforce has made the task of keeping the hard workers even more important than it has been before. Finding employees who are willing to wake up and go to a job that requires them to perform physically demanding tasks is becoming more difficult. The phrase "warm bodies" seems to be a phrase that is being used by multiple different employers in multiple different careers. Businesses are trying to find people to fill their empty positions, regardless of previous experience, just to help with the demands required of them.

The most important lesson to learn from the traits of our current workforce, is to try and keep the good workers you currently have. I've heard from multiple superintendents saying that if they had x amount of employees that worked just like somebody they currently have, they wouldn't need the size of staff they have now to carry out day-to-day operations. This makes keeping your good employees more important now than it has been before, especially during a time where it is an employee's market when getting a job.



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