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The young kid who was truly fortunate to have found a career in golf course management ... would never have dreamed of being able to profess my passion and love for this job through service to GCSAA and a term as your president.

## A sincere 'thank you' for a year to remember

At this time of year, it is common to reflect on the past while keeping a focused eye on what the future will bring. This year, that process has been even more poignant than ever for me as I look back on the previous seven years as a GCSAA director and especially the last year as I served as GCSAA president.

To say that I am honored and humbled to have served as the association's 82nd president would be a massive understatement. To be included among those who have come before me in the long history of this great association and to be selected by the more than 18,000 members of GCSAA to serve in this manner is a privilege that I will cherish for the rest of my life.

Making this experience even more special is the fact that it was never my goal to hold such an esteemed position. Heck, I still look back at the early part of my career and think about that long-haired Southern boy who was looking for something — anything! — to do after high school and stumbled into a profession that would become his life's true passion. My only real hope as I advanced in the profession was to someday give back a small portion of the blessings that I have received from my 29 years of membership in GCSAA, and during the last seven years on the board of directors, I hope I have been able to do that. I hope my service will be viewed favorably by you, the members of GCSAA, and that I have been successful in helping advance the mission, vision and strategic goals of the association.

As my year in office has wound to a close, I have been asked more and more about what our biggest accomplishments have been, what I'm most proud of. Honestly, that's a difficult question to answer. For starters, there are so many positive things going on with GCSAA — from advocacy and environmental accomplishments, to our growing communication and outreach efforts, and everything in between — that it is difficult to pinpoint just one.

But the thing that makes me the proudest about all of those achievements is that each has been moved forward collectively. While I have enjoyed the leadership aspect of the GCSAA presidency, this has never been about personal gratification. This has been about enhancing the T.E.A.M concept — Together, Everyone Achieves More — in everything we do. So what we've accomplished has been thanks to the efforts of my fellow board members, the GCSAA staff that work every day to serve

our members and the countless members who volunteer their time and efforts to serve their chapters, volunteer with GCSAA or work in other ways to promote this great profession. Together, we have all definitely achieved more.

The list of thank you's to those who have assisted and influenced me over the years and helped me get to this position is far longer than the space available in this column. But I must thank Jeff Vietmeier, who gave me my first opportunity in this business at Golden Eagle Country Club; March Benson, who hired me at iconic Augusta National; and Phil Shoemaker, who took me under his wing as his assistant at The Loxahatchee Club. I also have to thank the late Joe Duich, Ph.D., for the role he played in shaping me and my approach to this business and to life during and after my time at Penn State.

I am eternally grateful to the many past GCSAA presidents who offered their guidance and friendship before and throughout my time on the board of directors. This journey has been made infinitely easier thanks to the support of the talented and dedicated superintendents with whom I have served on the GCSAA Board of Directors. And finally, none of this would have been possible without the backing and encouragement of my employers and the staff at Olde Florida Golf Club.

As I leave office, I want to urge all of you to follow my lead and get involved. Network and communicate with your peers, and grow yourself professionally. Participate in the industry at a higher level. Volunteer at the local, state or national level. The industry needs leaders, and it needs support and guidance from engaged GCSAA members like you. I assure you that, like me, the personal and professional growth that you will achieve far outweighs the effort or any sacrifice you might make.

The young kid who was truly fortunate to have found a career in golf course management at the age of 21 would never have dreamed of being able to profess my passion and love for this job through a column in this magazine and through service to GCSAA as your president. It has been the honor of a lifetime, and I thank all of you for the role that each of you played in helping me live that dream.

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