



# GOING GREEN

It Works For The Bridges and Can Work for You!



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## **"SO WHAT'S COMING OUT OF THE GARDEN FOR DINNER TONIGHT?" A QUESTION OFF-ASKED!**

If you're fortunate enough to be dining at The Bridges at Rancho Santa Fe, CA it'll be harvest greens, snap peas, carrots and radishes picked at 4 p.m. and ready for your salad when the dinner service begins at 5:30 p.m. along with a tantalizing goblet of Bridges-inspired wine!

Just over four years ago, the team at The Bridges at Rancho Santa Fe, CA started looking for ways to positively impact members' lifestyle, health choices and the environment.

What's happened in that four years is incredible. The Bridges essentially is redefining the country club...the intangibles it offers its members, the green options and sustainability all while differentiating itself from other competitors, including local businesses and other private clubs.

The Bridges thrust itself on the southern California community about 10 years ago. "The club's management team is the thrust to be sustainable, starting with golf



course/ground superintendent Mike Hathaway and our executive chef Andrew Johnson, “enthuses general manager Sean McCune.

“The projects we have implemented are not all that expensive and in many cases have a very good return on investment. It’s just a matter of getting everyone – club members and our team – to think differently than they have in past.

“Our vineyard, for example, meandering around the clubhouse and covering about three acres adds to the club’s mystic,” McCune added. It was added for esthetic reasons and “was never really considered that it would turn into a full blown wine making operation that it is today.”

And that’s just one of the many outstanding benefits accruing to the club, its members and the community because of a strong on-going commitment to “going green” and self-sufficiency.

Another major factor for The Bridges has been competition...just like the strong competition many private clubs face today from high-end daily-fee golf courses, top end restaurants, spas and other facilities.

“We compete for business with many great local restaurants and we wanted to find ways to increase our market share. When we looked at what the best restau-

rants were doing we noticed a trend – organic produce,” McCune explained. “We were already using a fair amount of local organic produce but the cost was high and it was a bit of a challenge to get to the market place every day. Quantities were small so we may not always get what we needed for that days/weeks lunch and dinner service.”

So the club embarked on a search for its own solution – a suitable location on property for its own organic garden.

“Our executive chef Andrew Johnson already had a small area that he had been using to grow a very small amount of herb and novelty produce items. So we decided to dive in 100 percent.”

The club made the investment and expanded Johnson’s “little garden into what is now an incredible three-quarters of an acre working organic garden,” McCune explained.

“We employ a local farmer to assist in propagation, planting and sourcing the best produce available and the culinary team is responsible for daily maintenance and harvesting,” opined chef Johnson.

“We harvest daily...our greens, snap peas, carrots, radishes at 4:00 p.m. They’ll be ready to be served in your salad when dinner service begins at 5:30. We have

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365 days of great weather, so we can keep a very strong rotation of seasonal organic produce all year.”

During the spring and summer season The Bridges may produce up to 75 percent of all the produce used in the club's three restaurants –The Pizzeria, Main Grill and Steak and Chop House.

And for other local restaurants, The Bridges has become a local supplier...another major thrust in sustainability.

“We're now producing more than we can use and have several relationships with local restaurants that are buying as much of our produce as we will sell them. It's a small revenue source but helps cover the cost of maintenance and labor,” McCune added.

The club also hosts several wine dinners a year in the garden and features regular tours for members and their guests, much of which is a direct result of the club's mystical vineyard...an enrapturing viewpoint captured from the decks of the clubhouse.

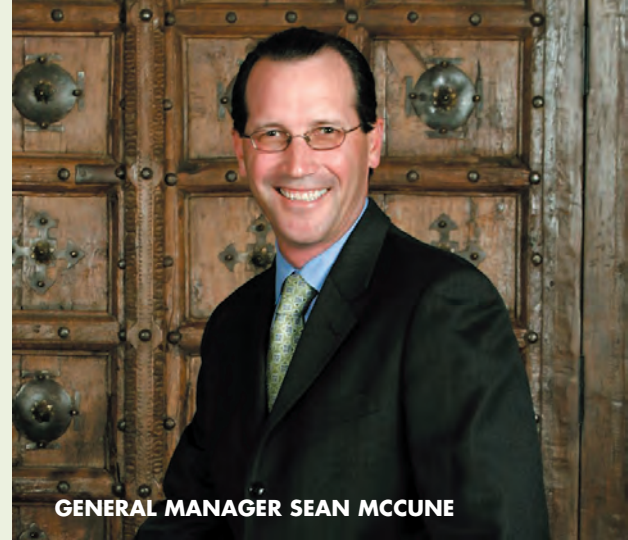
“In the early years of making wine we had very low production. The general manager at the time and our superintendent Mike Hathaway started making wine as amateur wine makers.

“They actually became very good at it and went on to win several first place awards in the San Diego County Fair.”

As time passed the club wanted to make a wine that would be accepted by the membership. “We partnered with a world-class wine maker who helped us with all the licensing and permits required to make and produce as a winery,” McCune explained.

“Since 2004 we've produced over 8000 bottles of wine for our membership and guests. We've sold out our 2004 vintage with very little 05 inventory left, along with some 2006 vintage. The Bridges' 08 vintage, bottled recently shows great promise,” McCune says.

“Our wine program is a real joy to our membership,” he explained because members are very involved in wine production process from the harvest all the way through the bottling.



GENERAL MANAGER SEAN MCCUNE



EXECUTIVE CHEF ANDREW JOHNSON



“Members help select the label, barrel taste several times a year so we can get their input and there's even help with the blending.”

The vineyard is composed of Cabernet, Brunillo and Sangiove grapes. The grounds and golf course maintenance team maintains the vineyard under the direction of horticulturalist Phil Sauer.

“As an off-shoot of The Bridges Garden is a 5,000 square foot herb garden where we grow all of our herbs, which are dried and package for use in the kitchens,” chef Johnson added, and “we have over 150 avocados that we harvest and use for a period of three months while they're in season.”

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The club has a large assortment of fruit trees and berries harvested seasonally, including peaches, plums, blackberries and raspberries, which are used during season. What can't be used fresh is canned and jarred for use throughout the year.

"We share the marmalades, jams and jellies as gifts for our member and their guests – all branded in true Bridges' Style," McCune offered.

The self-sufficiency program is never ending because The Bridges also has 20 acres of orange trees with the produce used to make fresh orange juice daily while in season. What better for an early morning breakfast in the bright California sun than a glass of homemade orange juice?

The many trees and natural native plants on the 580-acre community has also allowed the club to develop its own apiary with beehives and active bees to keep everything pollinated. This also means the club produces on average 600 pounds of organic orange blossom honey every year for use in the kitchens and for members to enjoy.

The Bridges uses Brandt Beef in all of its food outlets and "to date it's the best beef product I have ever come across," McCune maintains.

And it's another contribution to the club's sustainability. Brandt maintains a 'farm-to-fork' philosophy, which

involves raising its animals humanely and naturally without hormones or the use of antibiotics.

"Brandt also provides education and recipes to our chefs promoting the use of the entire animal. This commitment to sustainability also includes being responsible stewards of the land and has allowed us to take our drive to be sustainable to our vendors and suppliers. Brant also supplies us with compost from their farm that we use in our gardens. Now sustainability comes full circle," McCune enthused.

The Bridges isn't LEED certified but it is in the works. "This will be a strong focus for us the remainder of this year and we hope to be certified in 2010," McCune suggested.

LEED is a system to define and measure standards to help create a sustainable building industry. There is a separate LEED certification program for existing buildings referred to as "LEED for Existing Buildings; Operations & Maintenance," which encourages owners to implement some sustainable operations and maintenance practices in existing buildings to reduce existing environmental impact.

The Bridges' 'green by design and sustainability efforts' are all encompassing.

"We compost 100 percent of all of our green waste that comes out of our kitchens for use in our gardens. The biggest

## RED ROCK: A GLOWING EXAMPLE OF WATER EFFICIENCY

Golf, as we're well aware, is a huge industry in the United States...about \$76 billion a year, larger for example, than the motion picture industry. And water, remains a kingpin of this industry.

"Water is the "oil" of the golf industry, John Crowder related in a recent BoardRoom column. "Water is the fuel we use to run the living, breathing thing that is a golf course. Without it in sufficient quantity and quality we are unable to provide our product. Without it, we are out of business!"

Because of the lack of water, the loss or degradation of the industry would be serious for the national economy. For several states it could be a real blow. For example, as reported in the San Francisco Chronicle recently, California's "900 golf courses cover about 130,000 acres,

employ about 160,000 workers and pump nearly \$7 billion into the economy."

Fact is, many courses are not profligate users, as is often alleged. In the Chronicle article, Bob Bouchier, executive director of the California Alliance for Golf is quoted as saying, "golf courses are twice as efficient as any residential user. The systems they use are much more sophisticated, and they're better educated than other users."

Here's one excellent example...Red Rock Country Club in Las Vegas, NV...under the skilful eye of Steven C. Swanson, director of grounds and golf course operations for Red Rock, Arroyo Golf Club and Siena Golf Club.

"We have completely altered the original design of each course to promote significant water savings," explained Swanson. "What were once golf courses

with grass as far and wide as the eye could see, are now desert-style courses you would expect to see in the desert Southwest.

"On each of our three courses, we have literally carved away roughly 40 - 50 acres of turf from each course. These areas – once turf – have since been planted with vegetation more suitable to the desert climate."

These "turf conversions" have allowed Red Rock to reduce its annual water consumption by roughly 30 percent annually. Furthermore, water costs are roughly 40 percent lower.

"Annual water costs that once flirted with the \$1,000,000 mark, now rarely exceed \$600,000 annually," Swanson commented. Other factors that have played into this turf conversion program

single item that we do on the golf course and grounds is to sort all of our green waste so that it can be easily recycled once it reaches its final destination.

“This also allows us to chip and mulch much of our green wastes that we reuse around the property. We have reduced the amount of waste that was going into landfills or other drop areas by over 30 percent,” McCune proclaimed proudly.

And in another unique offering the club has recently started “a grocery store allowing our members to purchase our organic produce, beef and incidental items such as butter, milk eggs etc.”

There’s also been an increasingly strong push to go beyond the clubhouse gates to determine other service offerings,

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are reduced labor, gas, fertilizer, and pesticide usage/expenses. These converted areas are now nearly maintenance free except for an occasional weed or broken drip emitter.

“Our 120 plus acres of turf reduction is equivalent to ‘one’ golf course,” Swanson added...and that’s a lot of saved water.

Las Vegas golf courses have converted in the neighborhood of 600 acres of turf to desert landscape through cooperation with the Southern Nevada Water Authority.

In addition, Red Rock’s course, and many other in the ‘Vegas area have converted to recycled water sources, which has helped the city of Las Vegas reduce water treatments costs, reduced the potable water demands, and reduced electricity expenses because nearly all of the water is pumped by nearby Lake Mead.

Turf also acts a great natural filter for recycled water.

Red Rock Country Club also initiated a “no over-seeding” plan in the fairways to help promote a healthier stand of turf. This process has resulted in countless “green” savings.

“First and foremost, the Bermuda grass not over-seeded does not need the same amount of water as an over-seeded fairway,” Swanson explained. “Furthermore, the dormant Bermuda grass does not require nearly as much mowing in the winter months because of its dormant state, allowing us to trim gas and labor.”

The Bermuda grass has also reduced our need for key fungicide applications because is not susceptible to certain diseases that can often attack the ryegrass during our summer monsoon season.

“During our scorching summer months, each of our three courses also implements a ‘three man hand-watering team’,” Swanson offered. “While this may seem

trivial, hand-watering is a highly effective way to reduce summer water consumption. The process is labor intensive but it allows us to provide sight specific irrigation to those areas in need and avoid using our large sprinklers during the heat of the day when evaporation is greatest.”

As it is in any situation, change often creates ripples in life.

“The changes we have made to our courses are no different. Whether converting turf to a desert plant palette or using recycled water, these changes caused concern because of the ‘what if’ factor.”

“We’ve found that with a clear communication program, we’ve been able to address many concerns before taking action. And we have also been very fortunate because of the fact that water conservation is a highly publicized topic in Las Vegas,” Swanson concluded. **BR**

which impact the life style and will be of benefit to Bridges' members.

"As the Baby Boomers age, one of their primary concerns is access to high quality health care. The Bridges has established a unique partnership with Scripps Health, which affords our club's members immediate access to the top physicians in more than 50 fields of medicine and surgery," McCune outlined.

"Scripps Health provides a highly personalize concierge offering to The Bridges members and helps schedule medical referrals, second opinions and executive health screenings at one of Scripps' seven facilities in San Diego."

The other component of this relationship is educational. Scripps Health hosts a quarterly lecture series where world famous physicians share the latest developments in topics from dermatology to orthopedics and genetics to cardiovascular care, etc.

So how can other clubs emulate these outstanding achievements of The Bridges of Santa Fe?

"You have to put together a team of people who truly want to make a difference," McCune declared.

"Evaluate you current amenities and offerings and be willing to commit to change. It takes commitment from all the stakeholders in your club. Our focus is at being

the best we can possible be by not conforming to the old 'you can't please everyone all the time.' We feel we can please every member all the time by doing it one member at a time.

"We build relationships so we can help them manage their life style everyday," McCune emphasized. "We have a very strong member preference program that allows out team members to be empowered and make smart decisions that enhance our members experience at every touch point everyday.

"We know what they want and how they want it and have a team that is well trained and delivers consistently.

"It all comes back to the lifestyle and health of the membership and what we can do to make even more of an impact. We're looking at everything we do for our members and making the club's offerings better with the purpose of being sustainable one project at a time while making a difference in our members' lives everyday," McCune trumped.

"We strive to be greener, healthier and leave as small as a carbon foot print as possible. It's a very big deal to our membership. There are very few clubs doing what the team here at The Bridges is doing, and doing at an extremely high level.

"The health offerings The Bridges Club provides for its members are truly amazing and priceless in value," McCune declared.

## PUBLISHER'S FINAL THOUGHTS

The Bridges of Santa Fe is just one, but an outstanding example of what country clubs and other private clubs can accomplish 'going green.'

While society has struggled over the years, and continues to do so even today with many disparate philosophies of what's good and what's right, embracing green and sustainability today makes sense.

There's been a national push to "shop local" whereby we purchase our daily goods within a certain radius of our homes and clubs. The Bridges is an outstanding 'local' example.

Believe it or not, the food we put on our tables has an impact. Juhia Bhatia, in a recent article, "Eating Environmentally" explains that the average mouthful of food in the United States travels 1,300 miles before it is eaten, all while recommending that the most eco-friendly solution is to stick to local products.

It reduces packaging, refrigeration and transportation, all of which also have an effect on our environment.

A club can go green in many areas including water conservation (and many strides are being made by course superintendents and vendors in this area), fertilizer, vegetable and herb gardens, energy conservation and prudent waste management and recycling.





In fact, why not try trading your frying oil for fresh fruit? It can be done!

A club's development of a "green" plan can also help with a club's recruitment and retention program as people seek alternatives closer to home for their recreation and socializing.

Embracing green gives the private club industry positive public relations and private clubs today can set the tone for the community and lead the way by introducing sustainability practices. Country clubs in particular, need to be viewed as 'not a place where water is wasted', but as a club community with a strong commitment to environmental values, the community and environmental leadership.

Clubs need to focus their energies on sustainability, do it well and earn positive media coverage. This counts for a lot and will help differentiate your club. There are many different age groups coming into the private club market, including parents with families who want a family-centered private club.

Activities in their own communities have these potential private club members looking at clubs differently...there's a need to meet the demands of a new club generation and going green and sustainability is a significant part of that differentiation.

Talk about what you're doing...and what you aim to do because at the end of the day sustainability and conservation also meets the bottom line.

Green practices and sustainability save time, money and waste. Few clubs and boards of directors will argue with that. **BR**

John G. Fornaro, publisher

If you have comments on this article or suggestions for other topics, please contact John Fornaro at (949) 376-8889, ext. 4 or 105 or via email: [johnf@apcd.com](mailto:johnf@apcd.com)

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