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It's A Two-Pronged Issue

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MEMBERS, FOR MANY PRIVATE CLUBS TODAY, IS THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE...FOR MYRIAD REASONS.

And hand in hand with these are two others – the focus of BoardRoom magazine this issue – The changing demographics of the private club industry and what's happening to the game of golf.

Our cover story (Change: The Influencing Constant For Many Private Clubs) delves into how our varying demographics really are influencing what private clubs must do today to recruit and retain their members.

The initial wave of Baby Boomers, as Dr. Bonnie Knutson suggests, is surging through their 60s, which means private clubs need to know where their future members will come from...and that's changing just what the words 'private club' mean.

It's no longer just a man's world...it's a family-centric world with Mom making many of the discretionary spending decisions.

Our cover story, as do other stories in this issue, raise many questions. Both Knutson and Dr. Nancy Levenberg plunge into the demographics discussion and just what clubs *can and must do* to find the answers to growing and keeping their membership vibrant and relevant.

The second prong of the numbers game, and not exclusive of the changing demographics discussion, is raised in John Fornaro's Publisher's Perspective: Who's in Charge of Growing the Game of Golf? *What Do We Need to Do About It?*

By that meaning, how do we stop the bleeding...the net loss, and make golf more attractive and accessible to every segment of the population from kids right up to oldsters, from many minorities to the disabled who face accessibility issues at so many courses?

The number of golfers has been falling off by about a million a year, and generally the falloff is attributed to three factors – the cost, the time factor and the difficulty in playing the game.

While we might agree with these factors, there are many intangibles of why people start and then leave the game, or don't even bother to play the game. And, for example, why don't more kids play golf? Why don't we encourage more kids to play golf?

President Rick Phelps, in the article from the American Society of Golf Course Architects, questions if your 18-hole course is right for your club's membership. Is it a course that's so difficult that it makes players "think twice about their next round?"

"And then there is the next generation of golfers. What is your club doing to create and enhance interest among younger players?"

The big organizations, for example, The World Golf Foundation and the PGA are tackling the issues at a macro level, but what is your club doing?

Paula Olsen, PGA pro at Bella Collina Towne and Golf Club in San Clemente, CA who plays weekly with her BCKidz, enumerates the challenges in getting youngsters to play golf, but that doesn't stop her. Paula's got a plan...and it works. So give it a try.

As well, Kathy O'Neal, senior vice president for ClubCorp, in "Walking in Her Shoes" explains what can be done to increase the women's golf participation. Ya gotta "send a woman-friendly message and deliver on it." No lip service, just walking the talk!

Changing demographics and the challenges in growing the game of golf are realities finally being accepted. How willing we are to do something about them will ultimately tell the tale! And quitters we are not.



And finally, we continue with our series on BoardRoom magazine's top 21 private club presidents with stories about: **Bob Heflin**, president, Mesa Verde Country Club, Costa Mesa CA; **Harvey Krauser**, president, Boca West Country Club, Boca Raton, Florida; **Jonathan James Larsen**, president, The Jonathan Club, Los Angeles and Santa Monica, CA, and **James E. LeBlanc**, president, Sawgrass Country Club, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL. **BR**

Got a comment? Drop us a note:
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