



2012

▲ The winning team for the lowest score in the Ambrose Competition for the annual Presidents Trophy was "Bearings and Industry Supplies" Team members: Frank DePasquale, Roger Evans, Dale Burge, Mark James; with Past President Luis Gazzola (centre).

VGA Vic Golf Day

at Lang Lang Golf Club

The Annual VGA Vic Growers Golf Day was held in August at Lang Lang Golf Club located on the South Gippsland Highway. One hundred golfers teed off in the Ambrose competition amongst brilliant sunshine, firm fairways and smooth greens. After an excellent lunch, the competition winners were announced, with the Bearing and Industry Supplies team taking out the VGA Vic President's Trophy, proudly sponsored by Gazzola Farms. A raffle followed with a fantastic range of prizes generously donated by Industry Associate Suppliers, with the Royal Children's Hospital Auxiliary being the recipients of the proceeds.

This is the fifth Annual Golf Day held at the Lang Lang Golf Club. We would like to express our gratitude for the efforts of VGA Vic Life Member, Jack Walker, who not only liaises with the golf club, but on the day, positions the corporate banners around the course and provides vegetables for the lunch which he collects from a number of generous vegetable growers. We are most grateful to Lang Lang member, Peter Cook, who takes time out to check and issue the score cards at the start and end of the competition. There are a number of ladies who assist on the day by setting out the room and selling



Vegetable Industry Seniors attend the VGA Vic Golf Day

L-R Dini Michelon, John Milburn, Ian Marriott, Des Walker, Luis Gazzola, Jack Walker, Len LePage, Jack Howes, David Milburn all enjoy lunch with Joint Sponsor of the Golf Day David Fussell from Melbourne Market Authority.

affle tickets to raise funds for the Royal Children's Hospital Auxiliary, and we offer our special thanks to all who helped to make the day so successful.

The golf competition, prizes and raffle would not be possible without the Joint Sponsorship's financial support from E. E. Muir & Sons and Melbourne Market Authority and this support, together with the excellent donations from our industry associates, combine to provide an excellent day.

We extend our grateful thanks to Amcor, Bejo Seeds, Berwick Insurance Group, E. E. Muir & Sons, Gazzola Farms, Gendore Tractors and Machinery Kwik Lok, Melbourne Market Authority, Polyfoam Australia, QBE Australia, Rabobank, Syngenta Seeds, VISY and WFI.

President's report



Hi Everyone,

This year seems to have gone so fast, (or is it me getting slower?). I think we're doing the same jobs but as years go by it seems to be taking more effort to achieve the same results.

Spring time with warm temperatures and more sun light is just what we're looking for after such a wet, dull and cold winter. This year has been just like those in the 1960s, 70s and 80s - a real climate change compared with the last 17 years. But, what do us veggie growers know about climate change and how do we deal with it? We're the best in the world and do you know why? Considering the cold and very wet winter we have just gone through, when I go around supermarkets, fruit shops and markets and see the quality of our product, it's a credit to all growers that, under difficult conditions, a consistent quality of vegetable produce is continually grown and delivered for consumers. It is a pity, however, that due to higher prices the level of demand hasn't been there from the consumer. There should be no excuse for the public not to be healthy from eating all these clean, green and nutritious veggies.

To survive as growers, we must promote

our great fresh produce, with its natural nutrients, antioxidants, minerals and vitamins. Each vegetable has these qualities and benefits already built in - no add-ons or extras. Therefore, we need to keep reminding the consumer that veggies are the 'health food of the nation' and a better choice than other snacks.

What's happening in our industry?

The Association has been representing fellow vegetable growers in a number of areas:

- National Vegetable Expo 2013 - The committee met in June to get the ball rolling for next year's Expo. This will be another great display of new varieties of veggies next year. If you have any questions or issues please speak to Helena Whitman.

- Meeting with AUSVEG and Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) - This took place in June about projects relating to Department of Primary Industries (DPI) in Victoria on how the system works or doesn't work. The meeting resulted in a clear understanding of how projects are approved or not approved.

- The Grower Advisory Committee for the Epping Market Project - The group met in June for the first time since March. The Victorian State Government (Major Projects) and Melbourne Market Authority (MMA) released a document on rent that was not agreeable to the Committee. Proposed rent figures with an 8 to 41 percent increase were deemed unaffordable. With legal assistance, a response was prepared and submitted by 31 July 2012. Meetings were held with Major Projects and MMA to discuss a document released on the allocation of stands and warehousing, together with our response on proposed rents. The Committee's feedback on proposed stand allocation will be submitted by 30 August 2012.

- Work Safe on Farms - Discussions are continuing on this topic, but my message to growers is to ensure that all aspects are correct regarding the use of machinery and tractors for both themselves and their

employees.

- Issues on New Federal Law on Ownership - As employees, it is now our responsibility to check the tax file number and immigration status of each person who is employed through a 'Labour Hire Contractor'. We believe, however, that it should be the contractor's responsibility and not ours as growers.

- The Carbon Tax - So far there have been increases in electricity and LPG costs. Now we have a hidden cost called the 'Fridge Monster'. The cost of refrigerator gas is tripling with the carbon price, and that's going to hit us all very hard. It's refrigeration coolants that are classed as synthetic greenhouse gases and it affects everything that needs to be cooled in this country, especially veggie growers' cool rooms. The Government has introduced massive taxes saying: 'Importers of synthetic greenhouse gases will be required to pay an equivalent carbon price base on the carbon price and the global warming potential of each gas relative to Carbon Dioxide.' No one knows of this additional cost as we've understood that we have already received compensation for Carbon Dioxide Taxes. We are urgently seeking information from growers on how the Carbon Tax has affected you so far and examples of how it may affect you in the future, so that we can pursue these issues at all levels of government.

It is so relaxing and peaceful when we go out in the paddock to work in the fresh air - I know there's a delightful harmony in growing veggies with nature. Thanks again to all members, growers and industry people for your great support and we'll do our best!

David Wallace

President

For Executive Officer's corner

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The passing of fellow member Mick Tullio on Tuesday 21 August 2012 came as a great shock to all and on behalf of our committee and myself, I express sincere condolences to the Tullio family. Mick was certainly life's true gentleman, respected by all who knew him, a man of remarkable integrity who always made time to help anyone in need will be sadly missed by all. His funeral was held on Wednesday 29 August and was attended by many loving friends and family.

Vegetable Growers' Association of Victoria Inc.



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National Vegetable Expo Werribee

The Vegetable Expo Committee is hard at work planning next year's National Vegetable Expo, to be held in Werribee over two days, 2-3 May 2013. Make sure you put it on your calendar.

The Expo is shaping up to be another great event for the vegetable industry, with 11 seed companies already committed to providing exciting new varieties for growers to inspect at the trial plots.

The Expo will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary in 2013. The first 'Field and Gadget Day' was held in 1963 at the Keysborough Reserve, since that time it has seen several name and location changes and has been held at this site since 1993.

The Expo features spectacular field displays of vegetable varieties, machinery, technology and many other stakeholders exhibiting their wares across the two day event. It is also a great social event for growers, many of whom only see each other at this event every two years, as it draws producers from all over the country and also members from the New Zealand industry.



The Prospectus will be available on the VGA website www.vgavic.org.au.

Queensland Fruit Fly management in Victoria

The State Government has announced that eradication of Queensland Fruit Fly (QFF) is no longer likely or financially viable in most regions of Victoria. The decision has been based on factors including:

- There are still over 230 outbreaks across Victoria.
- Treatment and certification are significant regulatory and financial burdens on both industry and government.
- The cost to maintain an eradication program will be at least \$20 million/annum.

It is proposed to formally deregulate QFF in greater Victoria as soon as possible, as is the situation in New South Wales and Queensland, and to continue to work with the Sunraysia PFA region on the basis that co-funding and management practices can be agreed upon with local industry groups.

What this will mean for growers, is that it will ease the regulatory burden on businesses consigning produce throughout Victoria and provide free movement of produce along the east coast of Australia,

except Tasmania, and removal of mandatory treatment requirements for produce entering the Melbourne Markets and Distribution centres. The downside is that it could jeopardise potential export market opportunities for some industries.

The deregulation will be a phased approach:

Phase 1: Deregulation of Bendigo, Goulburn Valley, north-east Victoria and parts of East Gippsland as soon as possible.

Phase 2: Deregulation of the rest of Victoria (excluding the Sunraysia PFA).

Phase 3: Developing co-funding and management options with existing and potential PFA regions and working with the Commonwealth and other states to review the QFF strategy.

The concern from the horticulture industry is that there has not been enough time to assess the impact of this decision and to come up with alternative treatments for fruit fly management.

QuadWatch

What is it?

QuadWatch is a proposed Australian Government initiative bringing together industry, manufacturers, quad bike users and government to improve quad bike safety. QuadWatch aims to raise awareness of safe quad bike practices by establishing a network to promote information exchange. By bringing interested parties together, farmers and quad bike users will have a central point of safety information, guidance material and contact details of relevant work health and safety regulators in their state or territory. As a result

of the high national death toll amongst quad bike users, all safety authorities have combined their resources to address the issues.

The most recent publicity has highlighted the number of underage riders killed or injured, often completing the most ordinary of tasks (e.g. a trip to the mail box), where inexperience leads to even minor hazards proving fatal.

There is a total of eight State & National WorkSafe/Workplace websites linked to the homepage of QuadWatch, as well as a FAQ link, and a subscription option for updates.

The debate over safety or rollover bars still continues, with manufacturers holding to a particular view, while safety authorities are keen to search out a safe option. The weekly rural press publications carry regular media release information on proposals and research results.

<http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au> (search for QuadWatch)

2012 VGA Vic Golf Day

at Lang Lang Golf Club





Property Identification Codes for Victorian plant industries

From 1 July 2012, Property Identification Codes (PICs) will be progressively introduced to plant industries in Victoria. PICs will assist the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) to respond to plant pest and disease outbreaks so that industries are informed earlier and disruption to trade is minimised. The viticulture industries will be the first to be included in this initiative.

PICs are also used in the dairy and livestock industries as part of the National Livestock Identification System.

What is a Property Identification Code (PIC)?

A Property Identification Code (PIC) is a unique eight-character code allocated by DPI to the owner or occupier of a property. Victorian PICs begin with the number 3, followed by four letters and three more numbers e.g. 3ABCD123. The first two letters identify the shire in which the property is located. A single PIC can be allocated to a property consisting of more than one block of land, provided the blocks are part of the one enterprise and are within the one shire or in adjacent shires. Properties in the one enterprise, but located in shires which are not adjacent, require separate PICs.

What are PICs used for?

PICs are already well established for the livestock industries in all Australian states and territories, to enable tracing of stock movements for market access, food safety and disease control purposes. PICs for Victorian plant industries will be used in relation to pest or disease outbreaks. The contact details registered with the PIC will allow DPI to inform the property owner or occupier about any requirements associated with a pest or disease outbreak. These may include the treatment and certification of affected plant materials or associated equipment.

Do I need to apply for a PIC?

As of 1 July 2012, if you grow 0.5 ha or more of grapevines within Victoria, you are required by law (Plant Biosecurity Act 2010) to apply for a PIC. Grapevine growers who also have livestock are likely to already have a PIC. If so, you are required to inform DPI if 0.5 ha or more of grapevines are grown on the property. In this case, your current PIC will not change but will be updated to include this data. Growers not producing grapevines can apply for a PIC for other crops grown for commercial purposes, but this is not mandatory at present. Home gardeners are not required to apply for a PIC.

There is no cost to apply for or update a PIC.

How do I apply for a PIC?

To apply for a PIC, you must complete an application form. You may telephone 1800 678 779 during business hours to ask for a form to be sent to you. Once completed, the form can be faxed, emailed or posted to the DPI PIC Registrar.

What happens if my contact details change?

If your contact details change you must notify DPI within 30 days of the change(s), by completing and submitting an application form.

Further information

For more information, please telephone 1800 678 779 between 9.00am and 4.30pm Monday - Friday. Please note that PICs cannot be issued over the telephone; you must complete the attached application form. Information regarding PICs for the animal industries is available on the National Livestock Identification System page.

Are you a vegetable grower under 35?

If you are under 35 years of age and working in the vegetable industry, are you actively taking part in events and getting involved? Do you know what is going on? There are so many opportunities for younger growers that are being missed because the VGA and Industry Development Officers (IDOs), Rod and John, can't get information to you.

There are numerous scholarships and training opportunities available that don't take up much time but give growers the chance to develop business opportunities, network ideas and learn new skills. There

are several grower study tours for producers under 35 to destinations including China, New Zealand, Europe and the USA, which are subsidised and well managed. If you have family members working on the farm who are under 35, encourage them to participate in such events.

If we don't have your contact details, we can't let you know about these opportunities. Please provide your name, mobile and email address so we can keep you informed. It costs you nothing to know what's going on in your industry.

Employing immigrant workers

Please note: *This information is current at time of writing. There is currently an Amendment Bill before Parliament that could change responsibility and onus on to growers to ensure that all workers are legal. You will be informed should the situation change.*

From 19 August 2007 it became a criminal offence under the *Migration Act 1958* for a person to knowingly or recklessly:

- Allow an illegal worker to work.
- Refer an illegal worker for work with another business.

Individuals who are convicted of these offences face fines of up to \$13,200 and two years imprisonment, while companies face fines of up to \$66 000 per illegal worker.

Possibility of a prospective employee being an illegal worker

Not all visas allow a person to work in Australia. The possibility of a prospective employee being an illegal worker will exist whenever there is information to suggest that the person might not be an Australian citizen.

This could include situations where a job applicant:

- Mentions they are only visiting Australia.
- Presents a foreign passport.
- Provides overseas qualifications.
- Refuses to provide any documentary evidence to support a claim of Australian citizenship.

If a job applicant refuses to co-operate with the check, you should explain that you will not be able to employ them until their work entitlement can be verified.

Who is affected by these offences?

The offences apply to employers, labour hire companies, employment agencies and anyone who allows illegal workers to work or refers illegal workers for other work. If a worker is sourced through a labour hire company that remains the legal employer of the worker, the business using the services of the worker will not normally be liable unless it also has a legal relationship with that worker. In this situation the labour hire company could commit an offence.

Scenario 1:

Iain has vegetables that need to be picked immediately to prevent spoiling. He engages casual workers but is unaware of any restrictions on their entitlement to work. Would Iain have committed an offence if it is later discovered two of the workers are illegal workers?

Answer

Yes. It is the responsibility of all employers to ensure that they comply with their obligations. Iain should check the work entitlements of all casual workers as they commence employment. In this situation, Iain may be able to access the 48-hour grace period, as long as an accurate record of start dates for each employee can be provided.

Scenario 2:

Alan is a vegetable grower who obtains workers from a reputable labour hire company to pick a crop of vegetables. Would Alan have committed an offence if one of the workers turned out to be an illegal worker?

Answer

No; provided the labour hire company remains the legal employer of the illegal worker, Alan would not normally commit an offence. In this situation, the labour hire company may be liable. Once Alan discovers that the person is an illegal worker, he should end his working relationship with the worker immediately.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship may still issue Alan with an Illegal Worker Warning Notice (IWWN) because he receives a benefit from the illegal work. Alan could include a clause in any agreement with labour hire companies, stating that the labour hire company will check the work entitlements of all workers they supply. He could also request the labour hire company provide evidence that the check has been conducted.

How do I check an Australian citizen's work entitlements?

You need to sight any of the following documentation:

- An Australian passport.
- An Australian citizenship certificate.
- A certificate of evidence of Australian citizenship.
- An Australian birth certificate (issued before 20 August 1986).

These documents need to be accompanied by some form of valid photo identification, for example a driver's licence. Alternative forms of photo identification should be those issued by a reputable authority, and should allow you to feel confident that the documentation being provided belongs to the person presenting it.

The safest, easiest and quickest way to avoid penalties by committing an offence under the Employer Sanctions legislation is to check the work entitlements of all prospective workers.

The following documents are available from the Dept of Immigration and Citizenship at <http://www.immi.gov.au/managing-australias-borders/compliance/info-employers> and may be used as a guide for checking the work entitlements of your workers.



Parsley and parsnip

Research that needs to be continued

Parsley crop failures of up to 100 percent have been observed by Queensland and Victorian growers over the past few years.



Fig 1: Productive parsley in foreground with poor performing parsley behind. The photo clearly shows the commercial implications of these fungal diseases to valuable commercial parsley vegetable crops.

Early research and investigation into this serious loss of a valuable vegetable crop has been undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) under the leadership of Dr Liz Minchinton and collaborating scientists from government departments in New South Wales and Queensland.

Dr Minchinton said: 'The data gained from these projects suggested that there were largely three types of root-rot symptoms on Victorian parsley. Winter root-rot was associated with species of *Pythium* and *Phytophthora* (water mould type fungi).' Largely by deduction, commercial management practices were identified in HAL projects VG04025 and VG06046, which reduced crop losses from winter root-rot by nearly 100 percent. She said the cause of summer root-rot was unknown.

The approach to identify the cause of summer root-rot of parsley would be similar to the systematic monthly surveys conducted on parsnip roots, in the recently completed HAL project on *Pythium* root-rot in *Apiaceae* vegetables, VG08026.

Systematic surveys are extremely useful because they help to identify:

1. The growth stage of the plant when pathogens invade the roots, which enables the more precise timing of treatments e.g. fungicide applications to control the disease
2. The fungi present on roots, thus enabling:
 - a. Inoculation tests under controlled conditions (i.e. glasshouse pot trials) to confirm that these fungi are pathogens.
 - b. Molecular testing to rapidly and accurately identify the pathogenic fungi.
 - c. Searching of the scientific literature to determine if these fungi had caused problems on this or other hosts in the past. If they caused issues on plants in the grower's current crop rotations, then a change in the order of the crop rotation could be suggested to help manage the disease.

The above systematic survey approach helped to identify that *Pythium* species were the first to be isolated from symptomless and symptomatic roots of parsnips during monthly surveys of field trials at Clyde and Devon Meadows in 2009, 2010 and 2011 (Fig 2). A single, early application of a fungicide specific for 'water moulds' reduced root-rots by 50-60 percent. The pathogenicity of various *Pythium* species was confirmed in glasshouse pot trials. Molecular identification showed nine species had been isolated; four of these were new reports on parsnip roots in Australia.

Phoma and then other fungi including *Fusarium* were isolated two to three months after the first *Pythium* species. A literature search showed that this *Phoma* also occurred on lettuce, consequently it was suggested that lettuce is not used in a crop rotation prior to parsnips.

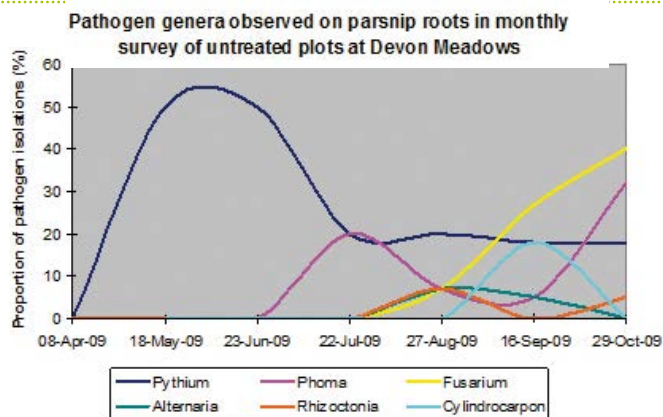


Fig 2: Fungi isolated from parsnip roots which were collected during monthly surveys. Each coloured line represents a different group of fungi. *Pythium* spp., blue line were isolate first, while *Phoma*, pink line, was first isolated two months after the *Pythium*.

Limited systematic monthly sampling of parsley late in crop development showed a surge in severe root-rot about 8 weeks prior to harvest (Fig 3). When a fungicide was applied at this time losses from root-rot were reduced.

Fig 3: Symptoms of winter root-rot of parsley eight weeks prior to harvest. Stunted plants have completely lost their root systems.



Further investigation after the clear identification of the nine *Pythium* spp. found within the parsley and parsnip trial sites, found that five *Pythium* spp. were exclusive to parsnips and two to parsley. Two *Pythium* spp. caused severe symptoms on parsley seedlings and the other species were only moderate to slightly pathogenic to parsley. Two *Pythium* spp. caused severe damping off symptoms in parsnip seedlings. The symptoms were similar to those on parsley.

With this large number of *Pythium* spp. identified within the parsnip and parsley trials, clear applied solutions are difficult. These fungal species are causing large crop losses, which in the short and long term have considerable economic impact to both the grower and the consumer. This research has come up with a list of applied practices that could reduce the impact of *Pythium* spp. on parsley and parsnip production.

Best management practices for parsley & parsnips to date:

- Check soil nutrient status as deficiencies can cause plant stress. Plant broccoli before *Apiaceae* crops as it is not a host of *Pythium*.
- Plant cultivars with resistance to root-rots.
- Avoid planting parsley and parsnips after lettuce as a *Phoma* attacks both.
- Avoid planting parsnips on heavy soils as it makes them more susceptible to root-rot.
- Avoid mulching root crops such as parsnip, but mulching parsley could be beneficial as mulch increases lateral root growth.
- Monitor four-day weather forecasts for heavy rains as winter parsley root-rot can establish a week after these rains.
- Applications of a *Pythium* specific fungicide at planting can reduce root-rots.

Further applied research is required to help:

1. Develop better strategic practices that will reduce the losses from *Pythium* spp. The application of chemicals is a band aid solution, as the number of fungal species found is high and potential resistance is a major concern.
2. Identify and manage the summer root-rot in parsley crops. The vegetable growers need close interaction with independent research scientists to narrow down the causes of these diseases and find a way of controlling or reducing their impact, thus producing a more environmentally friendly product.

John Runting VGA IDO East

Executive Officer's corner



Training for on-farm workers, especially in supervision, leadership and labour management, is lacking within our industry and principal farm owners rely upon suitably trained staff to maintain a commercial vegetable growing business. Agricultural Consultancy Group, Macquarie Franklin, will initiate an industry survey relating to the National Skills and Training Study. The survey aims to identify key areas of need for vegetable growers on-farm with respect to skills and training requirements. This will include a broad ranging review that will

encompass all aspects of farm operations including technical, practical, business and information technology needs. A series of interviews with growers and associations involved with the vegetable industry will be initiated. All members of the industry are encouraged to participate in the survey in an effort to improve skills and training for the future of the sector.

The Federal Government's move on illegal farm workers has aggravated Victorian vegetable growers recently. Growers who utilise registered hire labour groups to provide field workers during planting and harvesting, will now be required to individually check all visas and identification papers. This is the responsibility of the provider of labour not the grower - threatening growers with criminal action for not complying is totally unreasonable. Labour hire companies must be held responsible for their employees in the hired group; that is the reason why growers pay a hiring fee so that labour utilised is legitimate under Australian law.

The 2013 National Vegetable Expo Committee is now in the process of developing a planning schedule for the event to be held in Werribee next year, 2-3 May. All seed plots have been prepared and readied for vegetable seed planting with a range of varieties commencing for the coming spring season. A prospectus for exhibitors' static sites will be distributed next month. The biennial Vegetable Expo attracts visitors from each state, and also members from the New Zealand industry. 2013 will no doubt prove to be an excellent year for displaying a large number of vegetable varieties and sharing industry knowledge.

All growers who hold licenses for trading stands at the Footscray Market should be aware of the current negotiations between the State Government Major Projects, Melbourne Market Authority and your

representatives on the Growers Advisory Committee, David Wallace, Vince Doria, Luis Gazzola, David Kelly and Alec Berias. As a result of the proposals released, VGA Vic have engaged legal advice and opened a Fighting Fund. All growers have been asked to consider contributing to enable such legal advice to be sustained. Should you require more information please contact one of the Committee members or the VGA Vic office.

The 2012 Annual General Meeting of VGA Vic will take place on Friday 12 October at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Melbourne. All members and industry associates are most welcome to attend the event to commence at 4.30pm followed by dinner. Immediately after the formal business session there will be short presentations from a range of industry guests, which will then also be followed by a dinner presentation.

The VGA Vic website promotes the critical and often undervalued role of vegetable growers in their daily struggle to produce the healthy food we all enjoy at our dinner tables. The site regularly attracts over 3000 visitors each month. Searchable content has expanded to almost 2000 pages of interesting articles, over 300 R&D report summaries, as well as topical news and events. Go to www.vegetablesvictoria.com.au or www.vgavic.org.au.

Remember VGA Vic is YOUR voice of the Victorian Vegetable Industry and needs your support. Should you require more information about the services available to you, please contact one of our staff members.

Keep Smiling,

Tony Imeson

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