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# Becoming more involved

It's 4:30 in the morning, and I'm the only car on the highway. Minutes later, it's 4:45 in the morning, and my footsteps are the only noise I hear in the shop. As I walk in, I wake up Jazz, our goose dog.

Spending my early mornings and late afternoons checking the course have been some of the most tranquil times of my life. However, early in my career, I would check the course and feel very isolated — not because I was working alone at the course, but because I didn't know where my career path was heading. Fortunately, the past few years have highlighted the value of communication, collaboration, networking and a team effort.

I'm very proud to be the third Class C committee adviser of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents. I've been on the committee since its inception in 2003 as a committee member. The Class C adviser leads the committee, which is comprised solely of assistant golf course superintendents. Being a nonvoting member of the Midwest board of directors, I'm fortunate to represent the 130 assistants of the Midwest Association. The president of the association appoints the adviser for a two-year term, and I'm currently serving the second year of my term. The committee's purpose is to provide opportunities in the careers of assistants to help them become golf course superintendents. These opportunities include:

- The annual assistant winter workshop;
- Assistant shoptalks;
- Contributing to MAGCS' magazine, *On Course*; and
- Numerous opportunities to network with other assistants and superintendents.

The annual assistant winter workshop, which began three years ago, is the main event of the year for the Class C committee. We've have had several different speakers talk about various topics, including consultant Pat Jones of Flagstick LLC and meteorologist Phil Schwarz from ABC 7-Chicago. On Feb. 8, consultant Jim McLoughlin of TMG Golf will present his strategic career planning seminar to our assistants and superintendents. We

look forward to McLoughlin's seminar. Our committee is always thinking and looking for new topics and speakers for future workshops.

Another critical event our committee sponsors are assistant shoptalks, which are opportunities for assistants to get together at a specified club's maintenance shop and discuss the industry, club projects and equipment. We usually hold four or five shoptalks throughout the year. Besides, it's always fun to see other maintenance facilities.

As a Class C committee, one of the things we focus on is contributing to our association's award-winning monthly publication, *On Course*. No matter how big or small the input, giving back to your association is always important. Contributing to the magazine is one of the easiest ways to become recognizable within the association. After all, not all members attend monthly meetings or trade shows, but all of them receive the publication.

## Learn from experience

I know I'm preaching to the choir when telling superintendents and the veterans of this industry that networking is one of the most valuable assets of belonging to a professional organization. However, during my young career, I've met peers who don't completely realize the importance of learning from others in the industry to gain knowledge and experience.

A couple months ago, I gave a talk to turf students at a community college in the Chicago area. Most of them didn't have a clue about the realities of the job market, either for assistants or superintendents. My goal wasn't to scare them but rather to make them aware of market conditions. Unfortunately, some students have the illusion that once they graduate from college, jobs will fall at their feet. Truthfully, I thought this at one time as well.

It's true only time can bring experience. Hard work and dedication are just a few prerequisites for a great career. Neverthe-

less, some people with the best resumes still have difficult times. As with most instances in life, you must be aggressive and go after what you want. This is the message I deliver to the students I speak to. I'm honored people respect my opinion, and when speaking, especially to students, I take it very seriously.

I'm starting my 10th year in the business, the sixth as an assistant. I know there are many assistants in the industry with much longer tenures as assistants, and I appreciate their dedication to our industry. How many years will it

take me to get to my goal of becoming a golf course superintendent? I don't know, but I believe I'm on the right track. Being a member on the Class C committee

of the MAGCS has enabled me to meet people and form friendships that I never would have imagined. I look forward to many more opportunities to meet fellow professionals and learn from them.

## Communication is key

During my last semester at Illinois State University in 2001, I remember thinking this will be the last time I'll have to give a speech or write another essay. Now, five years later, I've learned that verbal and written communication is, and will always be, the distributor of progress. They're as necessary for our profession as sprayers, chemicals and other machinery or equipment.

Verbal and written communication is the cornerstone on which the Class C assistant committee is built. Our committee is dedicated to communicating information about the industry and our profession with assistants and superintendents. We're constantly communicating in a variety of ways via workshops, shoptalks, written publications and networking opportunities to provide information that will help support assistants on their journey to becoming golf course superintendents.

No matter how isolated you might feel in your career, never forget your chapter organization is always seeking new ideas to help promote each other and our great industry. GCN

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