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(Trust cont'd.)

he initiated an appointment on the Executive Board for a Class E member. I'm confident that this will also prove to be a good thing for the association. It is a goal of the CMAC to eventually have an elected seat on the Executive Board. I know that in order for this to come about, trust will be a major factor of consideration.

The committee will be asking you to trust us when we say that our motives are pure and in line with what is good for all the members of the MAGCS. We feel that what benefits the Superintendent member, what elevates his professional standing, what improves his image and perception by the golfing public will also benefit us, the Class E members. It is our goal to help and serve all members of the MAGCS so that all members can receive their just rewards. Trust us!

The St. Charles Country Club Nature Walk

by Peter Leuzinger

At the end of 1990 a new Green Chairman came on board. He was an enthusiastic golfer, friend of the superintendent, and good family man. His activity at the club to this point had been limited to golfing and dining. With the exception of one idea, one special idea, he had been in the background of club politics. The beginnings of this special idea came to him in 1989 when he took his grandson on a walk, away from the clubhouse and into our neighboring woods.

They found themselves on a well worn deer trail that wound its way some 30 feet above Norton Creek, a minor tributary to the Fox River. This creek babbles year round and just happens to provide the beautiful foreground for our par three, ninth hole. Our Green Chairman had no previous idea about what to expect in the woods, which prompted him to think how much he was enjoying this "nature walk" and that it would be nice if other people could enjoy it.

He went back to this area several times on his own attempting to sketch a routing for a future club sponsored nature walk. His enthusiasm and interest in a new activity prompted him to make a presentation to the club president. Like so many other things the drawing and project idea was sent to committee and pigeon-holed. Fortunately for the club, our man was nominated to the board of directors one year later and appointed Green Chairman. The very first item on his agenda was future development of the "Nature Walk".

One can not help but develop an appreciation for this type of natural resource. Hiking through the woods with all our family has become a tradition. We have come to appreciate the four seasons and what they have to offer. Bird watching, wildflower identification, animal husbandry, or just plain star gazing will always be fond memories of our life along the Fox River for me and my family. So naturally, when our new green chairman presented his idea, I was most enthused about its possibilities.

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(Nature Walk cont'd.)

I was very familiar with over 50 acres of timbered ground which lay north and east of our golf course and clubhouse property. I identified five areas and had informally given them names like: Flood Plain, Timber, Meadow, Gravel Quarry and The Thicket. The names alone conjure up a variety of habitat in the imagination of any nature lover. By using topographical maps and our own local knowledge of our area, we were able to sketch out routings for a walking trail. It was presented to the board and we were given the blessings to go ahead and develop the official Nature Walk for St. Charles Country Club.

Cutting out the path was fairly easy. In fact, very little removal was required because existing deer trails were used. However, we did cut heavy brush when it was necessary to route around

wet areas or to connect deer trails. Three inch markers of screeching orange color were attached to trees often enough for visual contact on the path. Most of the timbered trails are sand and needed no other treatment. A few wet areas needed some bark mulch. This is also a good trail marker. Four rest areas were cleared out and given names. Permanent benches and signs were added to make them official. They are called: Crook in the Creek, Deer Watch, Beaver Dam, and The Thicket; each have their own identifying micro ecology. A person's favorite spot might depend on their mood that day.

Having just about completed one full season of work with the Nature Walk, we can safely say that the project has been a success as well as a learning experience. We have had more
(cont'd. page 26)



The Nature Walk begins in the woods just north of the clubhouse. The routing is 2/3 of a mile and can take as little as 20 minutes to enjoy.

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(Nature Walk cont'd.)

fun measuring distances, posting signs; like ¼ and ½ mile, identifying wild flowers and birds. Now our interest is in informing users of the walk by placing additional permanent signage next to woodland trees and flowers as they come into their season. One example of identification of Poison Ivy (**Rhus radicans**) is not only educational but good safety for those not familiar with skin irritants. Wet lands, woodlands, and prairie all produce new and exciting colors all year long. Three of my favorite spring woodland flowers are: Trout Lily (**Erythronium americanum**), False Rue Anemone (**Isopyrum biternatum**), and Mayapple (**Podophyllum peltatum**). It's easy to tell the difference between a Red Oak (**Quercus rubra**) and a White Oak (**Quercus alba**) if you are a horticulturist. Our tags make it easy for future horticulturists to learn their differences.

Our excitement here is bursting as each season shows us dramatic change on the Nature Walk. It is refreshing to see positive interest like this in our golf course and club activity rather than the paranoia expressed by some groups of conservationists who claim golf course operations can cause damage to the environment. I believe programs like ours can be implemented by any golf course whose "suburban woods" offer ecology and habitat for all kinds of "fern and fauna". I perceive this project to be one that will help our golfing membership appreciate more of the work going on at the course. The nature walk concept is a wonderful public relation tool that can awaken people to the fact that the golf course is a real asset to the community. Not only will the project stimulate topics for articles in local publications and newsletters, but it will help the golf course superintendents expand their knowledge about so many things that take place around them every day and every season.



Norton Creek is just one of the features visited on the St. Charles Country Club Nature Walk. Many types of wildlife can be seen here any time of the year.



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