

Luke Strojny -N-



*Luke Cella, CGCS
Pottawatomie G.C.*

Luke broke into the golf business as a caddy at St. Andrews Golf Club in West Chicago in the mid-'70s. His talent and perseverance was recognized, and he soon climbed up the ladder to cart boy. Shortly thereafter, Luke's career path took a turn when he made the change to the maintenance staff. He worked at St. Andrews under John Lapp for five years while at the same time earning an Associates Degree in Ornamental Horticulture from the College of DuPage in June of 1981.

At twenty-one years of age, Luke took the position of golf course superintendent at Maple Grove Country Club in West Salem, WI (located about 13 miles east of LaCrosse). He worked there for two years and then found himself at his present place of employment, Poplar Creek Country Club in Hoffman Estates, since 1984. Luke became certified by the GCSAA in 1987 and has kept this status current.

When I spoke to Luke, he was in the middle of working on bid documents for capital improvements at Poplar Creek. Soon he will be ready to fire up his new irrigation system that will be complete this spring. He is replacing a system that has major components over twenty-three years old.

Luke has been a board member of the MAGCS since 1995 and has chaired the Membership, Golf, and Arrangements Committees during that span. He currently chairs the Arrangements



Debbie, Julie, Kyle and Luke Strojny.

Committee, so we all have another reason to thank him besides hosting our monthly meeting.

Luke finds enjoyment in his work through his love for the outdoors, nurturing growing things, and the day-to-day challenges he faces. The one thing he wishes could change about the profession is the time spent away from his family. He has been married to Debbie since 1987, and they have two children: Kyle who is seven and Julia who is two. Luke coaches Little League in the spring and finds himself watching his son participate in soccer and hockey in their respective seasons.

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A Superintendent's Responsibility

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intricacies of golf course management, teaching them what they haven't learned in school. Prepare them with assigning RESPONSIBILITY to carry out daily tasks and to manage the crew in the superintendent's absence. TRUST their judgment and abilities. Provide EDUCATION, as members in local associations, GCSAA, and attending seminars and conferences. Give them HONESTY with regard to performance and evaluation. Finally, and possibly most important, is FLEXIBILITY. Allow the assistant the opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them. All too often we don't give an assistant the opportunity to fail; and, consequently, we never give them the opportunity to succeed.

In turn, from the assistant superintendent, I expect: TRUST in the decisions we make that they will be handled as we agreed, or in some cases, as assigned. DEDICATION to the high standards I expect and our patrons demand. WILLINGNESS to learn, record experiences, and work long, hard hours. Being the first one to work in the morning and the last one to leave in the evening. RESPECT for my experience and training and in following the decisions we ultimately come to. CONFIDENTIALITY for information of club officials or members that could be construed in different

ways. An EXEMPLARY employee for all staff to imitate. A PROFESSIONAL in the way they approach their job, other employees, members or patrons, and association gatherings. The assistant must want to LEARN. All too often assistants come to us thinking that they have all the answers and know how to handle any situation when, in reality, they do not.


Earlier I mentioned communication from superintendent to assistant, but it is also true from assistant to superintendent. Remember that in order to communicate, someone must be LISTENING for proper instruction and plan of action. The number of students entering the marketplace yearly are making quality assistant positions scarce. It is common for a club to receive fifty or more applicants for a job opening. We are in a competitive market here, and it seems to be tightening as time goes by. There is no "fast track" to a superintendent position any more, and it is up to us to train our employees properly to give them every opportunity available to succeed in this profession. 

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When I asked Luke about his aspirations in our profession, he seemed to be caught off guard. But he answered very simply: to find contentment in his work.

The more I thought about the answer, the more it made sense to me. Our profession allows us to nurture beautiful places of recreation, enjoyment and supposed relaxation. Because every member, guest, or participant judges our work and sometimes is not satisfied with the conditions we provide, it is difficult to be content ourselves. Every aspect of our business, whether it is our budgets, personnel, employers, physical grounds, turf types, or nature herself, has limitations. It is up to us to recognize and understand these limitations and work within the confines of them. Once these boundaries are defined, it is up to us to achieve the uppermost limit within that confine. By doing so, perhaps we will and can find contentment ourselves.

I know the members of the MAGCS will be content by the fine surroundings and accommodations that Luke will provide for us at the March meeting at the Poplar Creek Country Club. Thanks, Luke. 

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