

And the Survey Says . . .

Editor's Note: Earlier this year, all class A, B, C and E members of the MAGCS received the 2000 MAGCS Survey. Nearly 51% of survey recipients returned completed surveys—a very respectable, and statistically valid, response rate. In recent issues of On Course, MAGCS president Don Ferreri has alluded to survey results in columns pertaining to the Midwest Golf House Complex at Cog Hill and proposed changes to the dues structure. The following article highlights results of the general section of the 2000 MAGCS Survey; to obtain a detailed copy of survey results, contact George Minnis at 630-406-5356. The MAGCS heartily thanks Mike O'Neill of Master of the Links, Inc., who donated time and money towards the preparation of a beautifully formatted final report on the tabulated survey results.

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In completing the 2000 MAGCS Survey, class A, B, C and E members responded to a general section, then proceeded to a special section customized to membership class. Of the 288 surveys returned, 170 came from class A/B members, 40 from class C members and 78 from class E members. The general section revealed that a majority of respondents—almost 30%—had been Midwest members for four-nine years. Another 23% tallied 10-15 years of membership. More than half of respondents boasted 10+ years of membership. By and large, this is a veteran group. Geographic representation among respondents was diverse. Some 43.7% of respondents characterized their club/company as being located "west," 35.9% said "north" and 16.7% said "south." Not surprisingly (given Lake Michigan), only 3.7% said their home base was "east" or "other."

Meetings/Outings

Responses varied widely to the question, "During the past year, how many MAGCS monthly meetings/outings have you attended?" Nearly 14% said "0," with 12.6%, 16.8%, 13.7% and 13% answering, respectively, one, two, three or four. Almost 20% of respondents attended five or six meetings over the past year. Most members, it seems, attend at least one meeting per year, and a substantial group of members frequently attends meetings.

More than half (55%) of respondents claimed their meeting attendance compared to past years has held steady. However, almost 28% said their attendance has decreased. By and large, to the tune of 82.4%, members' employers assume monthly meeting expenses. Another 8.4% of employers partially pick up the tab. Related to outing prices, nearly 89% of respondents felt that the current cost of these meetings was fair; opinion was split regarding the highest price respondents would pay for the monthly golf outing. Nearly 21% would max out at \$50-65, another

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28.8% said \$66-75, while 30.6% answered "\$96+."

Regarding meeting format, 67% of respondents said they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the structure, with another 29% weighing in as neutral or expressing no opinion. "What about increasing the educational time and awarding credit toward the PDI?" commented one respondent. "Well-organized and a good mix of social and education/meeting time," voiced another respondent.

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The majority (58.4%) wanted education prior to golf (another 22.3% had no opinion in the matter). Said one respondent, "I think that the golf outings are very well-planned. We need to fit the education in when everyone is fresh and paying attention."

Some 67% of respondents agreed with the current program of cosponsoring the October golf meeting with the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation in support of turf research; another 25% were neutral on the topic. Regarding whether the MAGCS should continue to offer social events (e.g., Kane County Cougars outing, dinner dance, etc.) outside of monthly meetings, a whopping 92.3% said yes. "A good opportunity to socialize with other members and their families," commented one respondent. "The offer of alternate social events can never hurt," said another.

Midwest Golf House Complex at Cog Hill

In deciding to go forward with establishing a presence at the forthcoming Midwest Golf House Complex, members of the Board of Directors acted upon a wealth of information and support manifest in survey results. A mere 7.4% of respondents felt the MAGCS should not consider joining the CDGA, IJGA, WGA and other prominent golf industry organizations at Cog Hill. One respondent wondered, "What would be the cost in doing so?" (The answer to this question, apparently, is that the cost will be relatively nominal.)

Scholarships

Nearly 44% of respondents said they had at least one child who would attend college within the next 10 years. Some 26.4% had two or three children who fit the bill. Not surprisingly, then, 63.2% of respondents felt the MAGCS should offer a college scholarship, with 16.8% saying "no." "The MAGCS should emphasize education," said one respondent. Commented another, "There seems to be an abundance of people looking for a superintendent's job. More scholarships will deflate the value of sitting superintendents." (Do take note that the MAGCS scholarship is not tied to any particular field of study. The scholarship is intended for the children of members who are good students and present with financial needs.)

Internet Usage

Internet reliance among MAGCS members is still far from universal, survey results suggest. Only 15% of respondents favored receiving MAGCS announcements via e-mail; 65.4% preferred "snail mail," while 20% had no preference. Interestingly, however, only 7.4% of respondents said they did not have Internet access. Almost 54% had used the MAGCS Web site (magcs.org); another 38.7%

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had not. Among those who accessed the MAGCS Web site, 31.8% used the site primarily from home, 38.2% primarily from the office/golf course and 30% weighed in with "both equally."

Several respondents proposing changes to the Web site commented, "Get rid of passwords." Another wanted to see "links to commercial Web sites and other industry Web sites." "No changes, just more participation on the message board," voiced another.

Hospitality

The MAGCS hospitality room at the GCSAA national meeting is a conference highlight for many

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members. Some 68% of respondents were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the hospitality room (21.8% had never attended). “Best in the nation! Way to go!” enthused one respondent. “Members and especially the Board should mingle and make others that don’t attend so often feel welcome,” commented another. “Nice job, guys! Keep up the great work!” said another respondent. “Have it at a restaurant/bar—rent the place,” suggested one respondent.

The hospitality room is an expensive undertaking, sponsored jointly by the MAGCS and generous vendors. Regarding what percentage of the hospitality room’s cost the MAGCS should absorb, 12.9% of respondents said 1-10%, 15.3% answered 21-30% and 8.6% answered 91%+. A substantial 42.3% said the MAGCS should support 41-50% of the expense.

Dues Structure


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(17.2% had no opinion), while 86.1% felt that the MAGCS adequately served their needs (9.3% had no opinion). A substantial 67% said they would support a dues increase if it were necessary for the Midwest to continue operating at current standards; however, nearly 20% said they would not support such an increase (13% had no opinion). “How much [of an increase]?” wondered one respondent. “I would have a hard time selling an increase to my board,” commented another.

Regarding how often the MAGCS should analyze its costs and dues structure, a majority of respondents, 68.4%, answered “every three years.” Nearly 29% felt that every year was valid. Some 22.6% had no opinion. Said one respondent, “We all know from preparing our own budgets that there are cost increases every year. Build in some kind of long-term annual increases to compensate!” Commented another respondent, “Continual evaluation of the chapter’s expenses will allow for

annual evaluation of current revenue from dues.”

On Course

Some 90% of respondents expressed that they were very satisfied (65.8%) or somewhat satisfied (24.2%) with the current format of *On Course*. “Newsworthy and informative,” commented one respondent. Said another, “The 30-day deadline is too long; articles in summer are not timely. The flashy style as compared with the old *Bull Sheet* appears to be cosmetic.” The opinion of another respondent: “I don’t like the continuation of the articles to the back pages. I would like the articles to go from one page to the next.” (As a monthly publication, *On Course* already adheres to an extremely tight production cycle, but we are always striving to be more timely. Continuation of articles is often a layout necessity AND has the added benefit of allowing us to intermingle editorial and advertising content—our loyal advertisers support the production costs of this magazine.) 

On Course With the President (continued from page 2)

contrary to what I previously stated, it might be the most important—is **respect**. We all know what respect means, but it is the one value that grows upon itself. There is no doubt that to earn respect from others you must first respect those around you. I do not take these five words lightly; I find if I constantly remind myself of who I want to be, it is readily obtainable.

I know I can rely on my crew to a man. I count on their loyalty, pride and respect daily. This did not occur overnight; it took, and still requires, leading by example and showing respect in return to them and their families. I admire the work and family ethics of my grounds crew and find it disturbing to notice a lack of these values in individuals who have been given many more

opportunities than they might have received. I have brought up this question of our character because we need this foundation to build strong communication. And yes, strong communication is essential for change to occur.

The MAGCS Board of Directors has instituted many changes over the past few years. I feel that we have executed very good decisions because our character has been in order. The changes that have occurred in every situation have been made in the best interests of you, the members. I am always available to answer questions, field concerns or listen to criticism. Keep in mind that I will evaluate my character and would like you to do the same. I have enjoyed working

with the MAGCS Board during these past eight years. I can assure you that I, like the rest of the Board of Directors, am here to improve and contribute to the betterment of our Association. There are no hidden agendas, only the desire to do a good job, a job to take pride in. Serving can be a very thankless task at times, but it is one we choose to do—with integrity and honesty, showing loyalty to the Association’s heritage and respect for its future. So, how did I handle change this year? I think quite well, and I hope you all agree. If indeed the words of one of my boyhood heroes are true, and “nice guys finish last,” then I say to you, Leo: I don’t mind if I finish last. God bless. 