



A Director Takes A New Direction

In his October message, Kevin DeRoo introduced me as the new executive director for the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents and the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation. My journey from certified golf course superintendent at Tamarack Golf Club and director on the Midwest Board to this newly created role is an interesting one. To wit . . .

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Last spring, when we first learned that George Minnis' disease had been diagnosed as terminal, a few things occurred. George conveyed to Kevin his concerns about the ongoing management of MAGCS and Kevin asked if I would spend time with him learning how he administered this Association. After all, no one other than George managed our affairs on a daily basis. Over the next several weeks, I met with George on a regular basis and he gave me detailed lists of the principal tasks he performed. The membership database, the mailings, the e-mails, the faxes, the directory, the golf events—all were explained and notated. George called me with things he had forgotten to mention and strove to make sure all was understood.

It was at this point that George's health plateaued and he held steady for a while. During this period, when I asked how he was feeling, George would respond, "I'm doing okay" or "Not too bad today"—always with an encouraging smile. We discussed the ins and outs of the Association and where things could progress once someone was in the Golf House managing on a full-time basis. Concurrently, we on the Board were in the process of putting out a job description for the position of executive secretary to manage the MAGCS and ITF. Both boards, with input from George, wrote and edited a number of drafts, finally sending out the notice. I personally had thought about the position for myself, but could not find a way to make it work financially. I knew I had the skill set and could overcome any shortcomings to meet the needs of each group.

Don Ferreri, a past president of MAGCS and current president of ITF, called me and asked to meet for lunch. As we hashed out the job description for executive secretary, he inquired about my interest level in the position. I explained to him that I could and would like to make a run for the position, but was unsure about the future. Don simply asked me to write a proposal.

My wheels started to turn. I already knew firsthand what George did for our Association. I was already taking care of some of the basic member requests to lighten the load for George. I thought about the MAGCS, its members and its future. Being a member, participating on various committees and serving on the Board of Directors had given me useful insights into the problems and challenges that are encountered by the MAGCS. Certainly the administration of the MAGCS had been second-to-none owing to the dedication and proficiency displayed by George over many years. As George faced the most formidable challenge in this life, he still was concerned about the MAGCS and making sure each member was content. His ever-present optimism and readiness to accept his future fueled my thoughts about my own future and our Association's promise.

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As I contemplated this position and the opportunity for the MAGCS, I realized its importance. I truly felt, as a superintendent member of the MAGCS, that even if I was not the best candidate for the position, we needed someone to represent us. As a member, I wanted to make sure that the day-to-day operations of the Association would be met. But I also saw an opportunity for the future of immeasurable worth and value.

I wrote my proposal. It was filled with ideas and insights:

"While this position currently entails administrative duties, the responsibilities of this position to each association (ITF and MAGCS) are much greater than organization and clerical work. A successful Executive Director fosters the advancement of each member in both associations by becoming the representative of all. The Executive Director is the person that people and organizations outside of our own come into contact with first. A successful Executive Director is able to maintain, grow and improve relationships internally and more importantly, externally."

Working everyday while thinking about my proposal fueled deeper thoughts: *"At present, the golf course superintendent is making great strides marketing the position as the most important at any golf facility. An association run and managed by one who has been in the position is ready to promote that image even further. When compared to other local golf-related associations, (PGA, CDGA, etc.) the MAGCS does not compete. The reason is simple. There is no one person who is able to promote the position of golf course superintendent on a local and full-time basis. The national (GCSAA) aids local chapters, but true exposure and promotion must come from a well-respected and accepted local strength, the Executive Director. The person chosen for this position must be a dynamic individual with the ability to span gaps among related associations, promote the golf course superintendent and bring the superintendent to the forefront of the golfing world."*

I continued bringing up more ideas, focusing on current problems with our operations: *"From my experiences on both boards (MAGCS and ITF), one thing that is lacking from board to board is continuity. Each member of the respective Boards of Directors volunteers time to serve. As with all volunteer work and duties, board members must prioritize tasks before them. At times, because of professional commitments, volunteer or board tasks and duties get placed aside. When this occurs, in combination with yearly turnover of board members and committee chairpersons, much work is repetitive, cumbersome or altogether forgotten. A successful Executive Director will correct this lack of continuity by having a firm handle on the objectives and goals of each committee, by recording and analyzing members' work from year to year."*

One advantage that I possess is knowing what it's like to belong to both of the associations that I now manage. I have been a golf course superintendent; I have walked in your shoes. I know what it is like to live with the weather forecast in the forefront of your mind. I know what it is like to feel incredible fatigue as August wanes. I know what it is like to have a work ethic that is second to none among the professions, to manage a diverse staff, to be a grower, to care for a complex ecosystem. I have become attuned to the many different disciplines that the profession of golf course superintendent entails. I have worked everyday in the sweltering heat, I have pushed the envelope with the plant health (not always under my control), I have strived to always improve conditions and never settle for adequate. I am proud to be part of a group that truly respects my fellow superintendents, not only by fostering professional relationships that advance the group as a whole but also by taking joy and feeling pride when an individual achieves accolades and accomplishments.

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of membership in this Association by providing information, enhancing organization and above all, by promoting the importance of the golf course superintendent. I am confident in my knowledge and abilities to promote the image of all. I have many ideas as to how to fulfill my personal goals and the goals of the Association. I am excited about my future as well as the future of the Association and all of the individuals that I will represent.

These are exciting times for every member of the Midwest. In the words of Harry S Truman, "Men make history, and not the other way around. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better." The leaders of the MAGCS, both past and present, have taken this opportunity to increase the value of membership to each individual, to increase the value of each individual to his or her employer and to collectively promote the profession to others. I am very fortunate to play an integral role in shaping the future of the MAGCS and will do my best for the Association and our profession.

