

ON COURSE WITH THE PRESIDENT
Bob Kohlstedt, *Fox Bend Golf Course*



A New Tradition for the Midwest

As another difficult growing season comes to an anxiously anticipated end, so does my term as President of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents. My board service was fast-tracked due to some unfortunate changes in the normal board structure. Five very fast years have passed, and just as I become more confident in my abilities, I will be handing the gavel to your next president. Looking back, I wasn't sure board service was right for me. I don't have any issues with the way the association is running. I don't like change. What do I possibly have to offer? I think this may be a familiar inner dialogue for future board members. Things are a little confusing when you attend your first board meeting and get handed a committee assignment, but after a few meetings things start to groove. It isn't so bad. I can do this. One more year completed and time to move on to the next. Then before you know it, you're the Vice President (no turning back) and the nerves return because you realize that next year you are running the show.

Fortunately for me, my term as President was mostly uneventful— no conflicts, no complaints, no attempted assassinations, and no public speaking. *Easy. Right? The only thing I have to pull off is the Turf Clinic.*

Just as the light at the end of the tunnel starts to glow, I get a call from our executive director. The Illinois PGA has put together an Illinois Golf Day Event and has requested the involvement of allied associations. *Free Lunch!* Representatives from the Midwest AGCS, CDGA, and Western Golf Association will come together and discuss the economic impact of golf in Illinois. *Sounds interesting.* The event is designed to educate state leaders, the media, and other stakeholders that benefit from golf. *Cool. I'm in.* Then I get more details. They would like the allied leaders to speak on behalf of the associations they represent. *Oh crap. There goes my appetite.* They requested a presentation approximately three minutes in length. *That's not very long; I can do three minutes without fainting.* Thankfully we have an extraordinary Executive Director. I think Luke felt sorry for me, so he agreed to help me put some thoughts together. *Judging by this article, you can understand I needed some help.* After countless revisions, I had a speech I was comfortable with and was ready for the event. It didn't even faze me that Governor Pat Quinn was to be in attendance. *Holy crap.*

The day of the event I was surprised at myself. I was not nervous, and was rather looking forward to the opportunity to represent the members of MAGCS. The inaugural Illinois Golf Day was held at the new Ronald McDonald House in downtown Chicago. It's a magnificent facility built to house

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Bob addresses those in attendance at the first Illinois Golf Day.

the families of seriously ill children, giving the families the opportunity to stay close to their children in their time of need.

The event started with comments from representatives of the Illinois PGA and CDGA. They described the amazing golf facilities in the area and the people that make up the golf industry. At one time Illinois' golf industry generated a total economic impact of \$4.8 billion, supporting over 50,000 jobs and \$1.5 billion in wages. I was shocked at these figures. Too many times we feel isolated, when in fact we are a key industry. The message of the day was not just the employment and revenues created by golf, but also the tourism that it generates, the charities that it benefits, and the environmental leadership our industry provides. Which brings us to my presentation. *Insert nervousness.*

I started by introducing myself as the representative of all the men and women that manage all the amazing courses that had been described. People responsible for maintaining open green space and the oxygen it provides, at the same time that they provide the opportunity for recreation in a beautiful setting. I spoke of the playing conditions we maintain even during difficult growing seasons. I detailed the environmental responsibility we exercise when applying plant protectants, nutrients and irrigation. I explained how improvements to our courses create wildlife habitat, control erosion, enhance wetlands, and filter floodwaters. I felt confident that I explained the science behind golf course

management and thanked the audience on behalf of MAGCS. *3 minutes 10 seconds.*

I was pleasantly surprised when Governor Quinn took the podium and echoed the same topics that I had described as important to the environment. I felt he understood the message the coalition was trying to convey and the true impact to the economy of Illinois. This may help influence legislation crucial to the vitality of our industry. I hope that this event will become an annual Golf Day, and I'm thankful that I was a part of the inaugural event.

I want to thank the membership for giving me the opportunity to serve as President of the Midwest. It was an honor and a privilege I will never forget. I am grateful for the opportunity to have served with professional ladies and gentlemen that have worked hard for the members over the last five years. Special thanks to Luke Cella for continuing to elevate this association to the highest level. Thank you to all that have contributed to *On Course* and to the hosts of our monthly events. We all owe a great deal of gratitude to our corporate sponsors. Thank you for your contributions to the association and support of the membership.

Finally, to my wife, Robyn; to my kids, Kelli, RJ, and Kyra; and to the staff at Fox Bend for continually making me look better than I am, Thank You!

Happy Holidays!

Bob **-OC**

Bob Kohlstedt shares a table with Illinois Governor, Pat Quinn and other association leaders from the PGA, CDGA, and IJGA who collectively hosted the Illinois Golf Day.

