

Mabel's Magic

By day, Mabel prowls the fairways of River Forest Country Club, successfully keeping geese at bay. On Monday nights, she moonlights as a therapy dog touching the lives of countless humans. Here is Mabel's stirring story.

I've witnessed the magical reaction people have had to Mabel since she was a puppy. It was not uncommon for people to stop us on the street so they could feel the softness of her fur or pat her smiling head. It is amazing that people will trust a friendly dog so immediately.

"Let's go, Mabel," I invite as I walk out the door and head for work. "We have another busy day ahead." Our commute to work is short, but we always have to make time for bathroom breaks along the way. We arrive at the shop and I greet the crew with the usual "good morning." The reception is typical; a "good morning" is received back from all, along with an occasional smile. Mabel has her own way of greeting everyone. When she bursts forth through the door, she shakes her rear end with great enthusiasm. She runs from person to person, tongue out and tail wagging. Everyone's face lights up as he or she reaches out to pet her, smile and say "hello."

You've guessed it, Mabel is a dog. Someone once said, "A dog can do with a wag of the tail what no man can do with a hundred handshakes." Upon completion of her round of greetings, she settles down, has a drink of water and waits for the assignment of morning jobs. Her job is always the same, the pay stinks, yet she never complains or seems unsatisfied.

Mabel shares goose-chasing responsibility with two other dogs: Henry, her younger brother, and her close friend, Roxy. River Forest Country Club has not had a nesting pair of geese for several years now, as these dogs remain vigilant. The freedom from goose droppings at the club is priceless. The membership appreciates all the hard work that these dogs contribute to the quality of the playing surface. We hope their work won't be taken for granted, as it is easy to overlook their importance when a dropping problem is non-existent.

However, goose-chasing is not the only function these golden retrievers serve. These canine companions also serve as a great public relations tool. Individuals who would not normally interact with me if I were alone, frequently stop and say "hello" if I have a dog with me. This magical, approachable quality of dogs is not a figment of this author's imagination. Many physically and mentally challenged individuals are currently receiving service dogs for social purposes. Service dogs meeting the qualifications as social dogs are paired with individuals needing assistance. Social interactions can now be approached with newfound confidence and self-esteem.

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Mabel (L) with baby brother Henry at River Forest C.C.

I've witnessed the magical reaction people have had to Mabel since she was a puppy. It was not uncommon for people to stop us on the street so they could feel the softness of her fur or pat her smiling head. It is amazing that people will trust a friendly dog so immediately. We reach out and massage a canine's back even as we avoid incidental human contact. Strange as it may be, it seems that dogs are more capable of genuine love than we more highly evolved humans.

As I continued to observe the magical interaction of Mabel with humans whom I had never met, my respect for her grew. I have to admit, sometimes I was slightly jealous. People found her more interesting than me. She was MY dog; they were supposed to see me as the cool guy who owned the dog. Instead, I was the guy who accompanied the cool dog. But I was not going to allow my jealousy to hold Mabel back; I was going to find a way for Mabel to do her job here on earth. I was going to help her to help people.

Mabel has taught me more about life and myself than I will ever be able to teach her. She has shared more joy, laughter and true love with total strangers than I ever have. I can't imagine volunteering my time without her.



Henry, Mabel and buddy Roxy keep River Forest C.C. free of geese—and their droppings!

I had heard about dogs in health-care facilities helping people with their recovery. I decided to do a little research on the subject and found that there were several settings in which dogs were assisting people. Hospitals, nursing homes and rehabilitation centers were all seeking assistance from dogs. Animal-assisted therapy (AAT) was a phrase that I found myself seeing more and more. My research revealed many different settings in which dogs were employed for the benefit of patients. Many of the programs that I found were similar to traveling petting zoos. For instance, a number of facilities will allow you to bring in your dogs to visit with the patients. You take your dog room to room and the patients will pet and stroke your dog. There are also organizations for those participating in therapy. People suffering from strokes, gunshots, alcohol and drug addiction, autism and many other ailments benefit from emotional, physical, speech and recreational therapy that dogs facilitate. I became aware that there were many different avenues available through which Mabel could contribute.

Mabel and I decided that if we were going to donate our most valuable asset of time that we would prefer to be associated with an organization that was structured. We narrowed our search and began to investigate the Chenny Troupe. We knew right away that this would be for us when we read the mission statement, not because we are fans of mission statements, but because of its

content. The statement reads: "Dedicated to motivating individuals with special challenges through animal-assisted therapy programs using certified therapy dogs." This organization works closely with healthcare professionals to achieve client-specific therapy goals. I was excited; I knew that this was the way Mabel was going to help humans who desperately needed it. After contacting the Chenny Troupe office, we filled out an application and registered for the test. Successful completion of a pass/fail test was necessary to become a therapy dog. Only approximately 25% of the dogs pass this test the first time. Mabel was great; she passed on the first try and was on her way to a successful career as a therapy dog.

Chenny Troupe works with a number of different clients in a number of different facilities. The therapy dogs provide mental and emotional therapy to drug- and/or alcohol-addicted teens. They provide physical and speech therapy to brain and spinal cord injury and disease patients as well as to geriatrics, diabetics and other amputees. They provide emotional therapy to children who suffer with autism. We are continually finding ways by which dogs facilitate therapy to people suffering from numerous conditions. These dogs have a way of breaking the traditional barriers of therapy work, allowing for more productive and efficient sessions. They will never replace traditional therapy, but they do

enhance its effectiveness by allowing the client to see what is possible. Whether the therapy is emotional or physical, individuals will manipulate their states of being for the dogs in amazing and dramatic ways.

After passing the test, I was required to attend an orientation for volunteers where I learned some important information. At the orientation, I was also introduced to all of the programs with which Chenny Troupe was currently involved. We picked a program at Schwab Rehabilitation Institute based on its location, schedule and flexibility. Mabel and I were integrated into the group at our own pace, ensuring her complete comfort. Mabel was eager to work and was completely at ease after a couple of weeks. At Schwab, there are jumps, tunnels, hoops and a variety of objects for therapy-appropriate activities. These objects concerned me at first. Sure, Mabel had passed the test, but she had never been commanded "over" or "through." In time, she has learned what each one means and what is expected of her. She does not care for certain activities, being the

Princess that she is; she would rather not go "through" the tunnel. If the tunnel is made shorter, she may be coaxed through, but one never



Mabel's brother Henry has followed in her pawprints and is now a therapy dog, too.

knows. This information does not hinder us. Used correctly, the tunnel can be a positive activity. Possessing the information of Mabel's reluctance

about the tunnel, a client may feel challenged by the attempt to coax her through. The variety of objects ensures plenty of options to provide successful therapy sessions for all of our dogs. This is important because not all of the therapy dogs are experts at the same types of activities.

The focus of the activities at these programs is not about what tricks the dog can do. It is not a "dog show" and we are not a petting zoo. The focus is on the patients and their therapy. The therapy dogs facilitate the evening's therapy sessions. Sometimes Mabel performs each activity with no hesitation, other times she has her own agenda. "The tunnel" used to embarrass me, but I have witnessed many great moments when the dogs unveil their own fallibility. The clients seem to delight that these precious, lovable animals, like they themselves, are not perfect.

Mabel has taught me more about life and myself than I will ever be able to teach her. She has shared more joy, laughter and true love with

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total strangers than I ever have. I can't imagine volunteering my time without her. She makes some of the free time I have seem meaningless, because the quality of what she does in such a short period is so great.

Henry recently started his career as a therapy dog. He had to take the test twice. You see, Henry is all boy and he is distracted easily. Henry is young, but he is doing great. Mabel and Henry play wildly around the house and on the golf course, but when these dogs enter the hospital, it is all work. I don't like to speculate on a dog's mental capacity, but they are certainly aware that it is therapy time. They stride a little more upright and hold their heads slightly higher; they are consummate professionals. They are well-respected and the staff and clients all look forward to their arrival. There are times when it is hard to fight the traffic after a Monday's workday to volunteer. I always manage to muster the courage, though. After the evening's sessions, I always think how thoughtless it



Mabel (far left), Henry (far right) and Chenny Troupe colleagues pose with the jumps, hoops and tunnels used during therapy sessions at Schwab.

would have been to take away from the clients something that they look forward to all week, because I didn't feel like it.

Volunteering is something we hear more and more of. Our superintendents' association encourages it,

prospective employers value it and many people benefit from it. Involvement with your community increases a feeling of connection. Volunteering promotes a sense of self worth. You may think that you have little to give, but this is a common misconception. Time and energy are very valuable

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resources. The nonprofit organizations that are dedicated to improving the quality of life for others survive solely on the generosity of volunteers. One amazing statistic I have come across is that about 80% of the population is willing to volunteer; they just need one thing—to be asked. So, if you are involved in volunteerism and could use some help for your organization, ask a friend, neighbor or coworker to help out.

I would like to dedicate this article to all the hard-working dogs out there who keep our spirits up, day in and day out. Through the dog days of summer, our friends are always there for us, companions in the best and worst of times. Especially Callaway, who left this world on Christmas Day, 2001. I offer my sincerest condolences to Brian Baker.

A Word of Caution

Hospitals, especially nursing homes, will often allow pet owners to visit with patients. This type of visitation did not appeal to me and I would discourage anyone from doing this type of volunteering for several reasons: first, your dog is important to you. Your dog may be the mildest dog in the world, but a hospital is a strange place with many strange people and apparatus. Dogs need to be acclimated to this environment and there are professionals who can help.

Second, most facilities are understaffed. A facility may encourage you to bring your dog in, and once you're there, you are on your own. People dealing with patients need some training, some dos and don'ts. Turning someone loose inside a hospital with a dog can be a bad experience. You need to know some facts about the patient and may need preparation for what you will experience.

Third, there is the issue of money. Professional, established organizations ensure you have the coverage necessary under insurance. If you are unsure of coverage, check with any potential organization before your first visit. If your dog trips over an IV tube, and you are not covered under the insurance of the hospital, a potential bad situation arises. There are a thousand scenarios, each with varying outcomes. It is best you work with an experienced organization that provides coverage for you and works closely with the facility in a professional manner.



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Economic Growth & Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001

Introduction

On June 7, 2001, President Bush signed into law the \$1.35 trillion tax cut bill that contained substantial changes in retirement plans, including 403(b) and 457(b) eligible deferred compensation plans. This brief summary highlights the changes.

Increased Contribution Limits

On January 1, 2002, employee contributions to 403(b) and 457(b) plans will increase and no longer be subject to coordination of contributions to the two types of plans. You may be able to contribute up to the full eligible limits to each of the two types of plans as follows: See table 1.

For 457(b) plans only, the catch-up option for the last three tax years prior to normal retirement age (or actual retirement) will change from \$15,000 to twice the amount of the basic limit. Participants who use the 457 catch-up option will not be eligible to use the age 50 catch-up. This catch-up option does apply to both governmental and non-governmental 457(b) plans.

Result

Because of the repeal of the coordination of contributions to both types of plans, in 2002, individuals under age 50 can contribute \$11,000 to the 403(b) plan, and \$11,000 to the 457(b) plan. Those over age 50 can contribute \$12,000 to each – with 15 or more years of service, eligible employees over age 50 can contribute as much as \$15,000 to the 403(b) plan.

Table 1

	*BASIC LIMIT	**AGED 50 OR OVER	***403(B) PLANS ONLY 15 YRS. OF SERVICE
2002	\$11,000	\$1,000	Eligible employees
2003	\$12,000	\$2,000	may be able to
2004	\$13,000	\$3,000	contribute up to
2005	\$14,000	\$4,000	\$3,000 more to a
2006 & after, (indexed in \$500 increments)	\$15,000	\$5,000	maximum of \$15,000

* Applies to both governmental and non-governmental 457(b) plans.

** Applies only to governmental 457(b) plans.

*** A calculation will be required; subject to prior contributions to elective deferral plans.

FOR PARTICIPANTS CONTRIBUTING TO BOTH A 457(B) GOVERNMENTAL PLAN AND 403(B) PLAN

The following illustrates the total amounts an employee who contributes to both a 457 plan and a 403(b) plan might be able to contribute beginning in 2002 through 2006 and after (not counting limit increases due to indexing taking place in years after 2006): See table 2.

403(b) Calculations Beginning in 2002

Your calculations will be based on 100% of includible compensation (not 25% under IRC 415(c) as is permitted this year) to the above limits for participants making salary reduction contributions only. (For 457(b) plans, the calculations are also based on 100% of includible compensation vs. 33-1/3% for years prior to 2002.) For employer contributions, the dollar limit is changed to \$40,000. The

Table 2

	BASIC LIMITS	AGED 50 & OVER	IF ELIGIBLE: 15 YRS. OF SERVICE; 403(B)	TOTAL
2002	\$22,000	\$24,000	Plus \$3,000	\$27,000
2003	\$24,000	\$28,000	Plus \$3,000	\$31,000
2004	\$26,000	\$32,000	Plus \$3,000	\$35,000
2005	\$28,000	\$36,000	Plus \$3,000	\$39,000
2006 & after	\$30,000	\$40,000	Plus \$3,000	\$43,000

The illustration does not take into consideration the 457 plan catch-up option in the last three tax years before retirement, which would substantially increase the totals (because it is twice the basic dollar limit).

exclusion allowance, and catch-up options A, B and C, have been repealed. A calculation for the 15 or more years of service increased elective deferral limit (as much as \$3,000 per year for employees who are eligi-

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ble) will still be required; however, calculations will be greatly simplified.

Calculations Beginning in 2001, Immediate Opportunity

For the current year (and retroactively to January 1, 2000), the contributions for years prior to the current one which are being made to state retirement system defined benefit plans (or any other defined benefit plan) will not be subtracted from the exclusion allowance.

EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTION PLANS Post-Retirement Contributions to 403(b) Plans

Employers will be permitted to make contributions for retired employees for a full five years after the year of retirement up to the maximum limit of 100% of the last full year's includible compensation capped at \$40,000 (beginning after January 1, 2002 and indexed in \$1,000 increments). This provides significant opportunity to replace more expensive severance pay with post-retirement contributions – as well as opportunity to construct early retirement incentive programs. This applies only to 403(b) plans – not to 457 or 401(a) plans.

Paired 457(b) and 403(b) Plans

Now that the coordination limit does not apply to 457(b) and 403(b) (or 457(b) and 401(k) plans), there will be interest on the part of employers to take advantage of employer contribution plans pairing the two. This would mean that an employer could contribute 100% of the affected employee's compensation up to \$40,000 to the 403(b) plan, while the employee could still make salary reduction contributions (\$11,000/12,000 in 2002 increasing to \$15,000/\$20,000 in 2006 as indicated under the contribution limits section) to the 457 plan. The following chart illustrates the possible amounts that both the employer and the employee might contribute to the paired plans: See table 3.

Paired 401(a) and 403(b) Plans

While the wording in the bill is not entirely clear, it appears that there are still two separate 415(c) limits for the 401(a) defined contribution plan and the 403(b) plan. The IRS has informally stated that this is the case, and has also said that the reference in the bill to the issue of non-aggregation was a technical correction to the earlier repeal of the 415(c) limits. Most professionals concur with the IRS informal assurance. However, it is important to note that the issue will be closely monitored for guidance that would impact the current position. Some do believe that we could get Technical Corrections (once more) to force aggregation of the two limits.

PENSION PORTABILITY

401(a), 403(b), Governmental 457(b), SEP, and IRA assets can be interchangeably rolled over, provided that participants are eligible for a distribution, and provided that the distribution is an eligible rollover distribution. (Pension portability does not extend to Roth IRAs nor to non-governmental 457(b) plans.) The following points are important:

1. Governmental 457(b) assets have not been eligible for rollover treatment in the past – thus, there will be enormous interest in the new ability to take advantage of tax-deferral. It is important to note that qualified plan assets, 403(b) values, or

deductible IRA values that are rolled into a 457(b) plan will be required to be separately tracked because the additional 10% federal income tax penalty will continue to be applied to the assets rolled into the 457(b) plan. It is possible that 457(b) plans will not accept the rollovers from other types of plans because of the requirement. If 457(b) plan assets are rolled into qualified plans, 403(b) plans, or IRAs, there is no requirement that values be segregated because the 457(b) assets will be subject to the 10% premature distribution penalty after the rollover (if applicable). (Keep in mind that 457(b) distributions are not subject to the additional 10% federal income tax penalty.)

2. Conduit IRAs will no longer be relevant. This will mean that any IRA consisting of pre-tax account values (whether derived from annual contribution IRAs, or rollovers from other types of pre-tax plans) can be rolled to (for example) the 403(b) contract. Because IRAs have no withdrawal restrictions, many IRA account holders may be interested in combining those accounts with their "workplace plan." As long as the "once per year IRA rollover rule" is not violated, those accounts will be available for immediate rollover. Also, IRAs consisting of after-tax contributions (often referred to as nondeductible IRAs) are not permitted to be rolled over to any type of "workplace plan," only to another IRA.

Table 3

	EMPLOYER/ 403(B) PLAN	EMPLOYEE/ 457 PLAN:		
		BASIC	*AGED 50 & OVER	LAST 3 YEARS
2002	\$40,000	\$11,000	\$12,000	\$22,000
2003	\$40,000	\$12,000	\$14,000	\$24,000
2004	\$40,000	\$13,000	\$16,000	\$26,000
2005	\$40,000	\$14,000	\$18,000	\$28,000
2006 & after	\$40,000	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$30,000

*457(b) Governmental Plans Only

Note: The \$40,000 limit is indexed in \$1,000 increments instead of \$5,000 increments as has been the case for years prior to 2002. Thus, it is probable that limits will move up frequently, subject to increases in the CPI, the index used.

3. Other than the 10% premature distribution penalty tax issue for 457 governmental plan assets rolled over, the rolled over amounts will assume the characteristics of the type of account/plan to which it is rolled.

USE OF 403(B) OR 457 ASSETS TO PURCHASE YEARS OF SERVICE CREDITS

In many states, participants in the state retirement system defined benefit plans are given an option to purchase additional years of service in that plan – to increase credits for larger monthly income. Generally, participants have made additional pre-tax contributions directly from their paychecks to purchase those credits. On January 1, 2002, tax-free transfers of 403(b) and 457 plan assets will be permitted to purchase the additional years of service credits. If values are transferred to purchase defined benefit income, then contributions can be increased (for those not already contribution at maximum levels) to replace the values transferred.

OTHER CHANGES Contributions to an IRA or a Roth IRA

Limits in 2002 will increase to \$3,000, plus \$500 additional for participants age 50 or older, and will grade up to \$5,000 in 2008. Those age 50 or older will be able to contribute an additional \$1,000 per year in 2006 and after. Indexing in \$500 increments will apply after 2008. The eligibility rules for IRAs and Roth IRAs have not changed.

The Roth 403(b) or 401(k)

After-tax contributions will be permitted, with distribution rules similar to the Roth IRA – however, the effective date is delayed to January 1, 2006.

NEW CHANGES SCHEDULED TO EXPIRE

The bill contains a sunset provision which would cause all of the changes to expire on December 31, 2010 and the “old rules” to apply after that. The provision was

added to avoid filibuster (which could have seriously impacted passage). A new bill, H.R. 2316, has already been introduced to eliminate the sunset provision in EGTRRA; however, we don't know at this time whether or not this Congress will deal with it. It may be up to future Congresses to change the sunset provision to make the changes permanent.



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the Bull Sheet

John Gurke, CGCS
Contributing Editor

DATES TO REMEMBER

February 3-10 — GCSAA International Golf Course Conference and Show in Orlando, FL.

February 5-28 — Turf Professionals Equipment Company (formerly Chicago Turf & Irrigation) Technical Training Schools for Turf Equipment and Golf Course Irrigation in Itasca, IL. More details below.

February 19 & 20 — 20th Annual Southern Illinois Grounds Maintenance School in Collinsville, IL. More info below.

February 25-March 1 — Indiana-Illinois Turfgrass Short Course in Willowbrook, IL. More info below.

February 28 — J.W. Turf's John Deere Service School. Location and information still to come.

As mentioned in Dates to Remember, the 20th Annual Southern Illinois Grounds Maintenance School will be held on the 19th and 20th of this month at the Gateway Convention Center in Collinsville, IL. GCSAA will offer 0.9 PDUs toward certification renewal for participation in this seminar, which includes a full day (Wednesday) of classes taught in Spanish. Obtain registration information by calling 618-236-8600, or by filling out the form you got in the mail that I'm reading from right now—the yellow one.

Turf Professionals Equipment Company will be offering one-day technical training schools throughout this month for the following topics: February 5, 6 and 7—Groundmaster 580D Series. February 26, 27 and 28—Reelmaster

5000. February 12, 13 and 14—Site Pro programming and utilization. February 19, 20 and 21—Field hardware troubleshooting. Classes are limited to 20 participants, and reservations can be made by calling 630-773-5583 for turf equipment classes and 630-773-5467 for irrigation classes.

Also noted in Dates to Remember is the week-long Indiana-Illinois Turfgrass Short Course from February 25 through March 1 at the Holiday Inn in Willowbrook, IL. This annual school is intended for people who are currently employed or are considering employment in the turfgrass industry. Obtain registration and information by calling Bev Bratton at 765-494-8039 or Tom Voigt at 217-333-7847; or you can fill out another form you got in the mail that I once again am reading from—the blue one.

One of MAGCS's very own board members has defected to the land of milk and cheese—**Dave "Junior" Braasch**, formerly of Hughes Creek Golf Club, has accepted the golf course superintendent's position at the Glen Erin Golf Club in Janesville, WI. Glen Erin is a links-style course designed by another MAGCS member—**Greg Martin**—and is currently under construction adjacent to the bustling Janesville airport. We all wish Dave good luck in his new endeavor, and may he stay warm while his shop is being built. Congratulations, Junior!

Another round of congrats is in order to Jeff Hoste, former assistant superintendent under **Dave Blomquist**, CGCS at Naperville C.C. Jeff is the new superintendent of Kishwaukee Country Club, replacing **Phil Zeinert**, CGCS, who moved up to Elgin C.C. this past fall. Good luck, Jeff—now you don't have Dave to knock you around anymore . . .

Attention all MAGCS members with children who qualify: The MAGCS Scholarships are available once again. This year, two \$1,000 MAGCS and one \$1,000 John Buck Memorial scholarships will be awarded, so get those applications in—the deadline is March 31. For information on how to apply, contact **Kevin DeRoo** of Bartlett Hills G.C. (MAGCS Scholarship Committee chairman) at 630-483-4991, and best of luck to all applicants.

The MAGCS has been at the forefront of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses since its inception, and we now have a new feather to wear in our collective caps—**Dan Murray**, CGCS of Settler's Hill Golf Course is very proud to announce that they are the first-ever golf course situated on a sanitary landfill to become fully certified as a cooperative sanctuary. Dan is quick to note that assistant **Russ Wescott** did ALL of the work involved in achieving this impressive accomplishment, and gladly defers all kudos to Russ for a job well done. Congratulations, Dan and Russ!

Congratulations also to **Don Cross**, CGCS of Skokie Country Club, which also became fully certified with the ACSP for golf courses. Don and assistant **Brock Burton** worked many long hours to achieve this goal, and are very proud of their accomplishment (as they should be).

MAGCS congratulates past president **Bruce Williams**, CGCS, of Los Angeles Country Club on being named GCSAA's Distinguished Service Award winner in Orlando this month. Bruce joins his father, **Bob Williams** (1977), along with a who's who list of past and current MAGCS members to receive this prestigious honor, including **John MacGregor** (1935), **Ted Woehrle** (1964), **Ray Gerber** (1975), **Warren Bidwell** (1984) and **Mike Bavier** (2000). Great job, Bruce!

In keeping with the spirit of the holidays, **Dave Nadler**, president of Nadler Golf Car Sales, and Club Car teamed up recently to make a contribution to the CDGA Foundation

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