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DECEMBER 2004

Volume 58 No.7

FRONT COVER

The northern cardinal, our state bird in Illinois, is also a symbol of the holiday season. This brilliant male cardinal was captured on film by Tom Maple, an award-winning nature photographer based in Ingleside.

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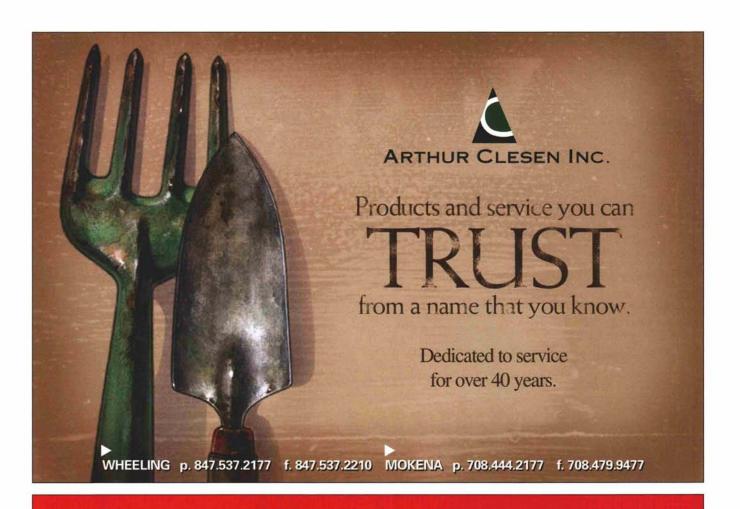
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Cathy Miles Ralston

The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS), founded December 24, 1926, is a professional organization whose goals include preservation and dissemination of scientific and practical knowledge pertaining to golf turf maintenance.

We endeavor to increase efficiency and economic performance while improving and enhancing the individual and collective prestige of the members.

The MAGCS member is also an environmental steward. We strive to uphold and enhance our surroundings by promoting flora and fauna in every facet in a manner that is beneficial to the general public now and in the future.



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ON COURSE WITH THE PRESIDENT

Phil Zeinert, CGCS Elgin Country Club

What's the Plan?

It is with great enthusiasm and energy that I undertake the role of leading the MAGCS. It really feels good to be able to give back to an Association that has provided me with many networking and educational opportunities over the past 18 years of my membership.

The chapter assessment tool completed
by Board members
over the summer
will serve as
the basis for
an MAGCS
strategic planning
meeting on
December 9 at
Midwest Golf
House.

As the workload lessens this time of year with daily operations at each of our courses and businesses, it is time to evaluate the previous year and plan for the next year. I recently completed this task at my facility, Elgin Country Club. It starts with a self-evaluation of the previous year's goals and then leads into discussion of goals for next year. Of course, the most important factor in determining goals is member input via membership surveys and green committee members. These goals are the focus for the next golfing season at Elgin Country Club. We are currently undertaking a similar process with the Board of Directors and staff of the MAGCS.

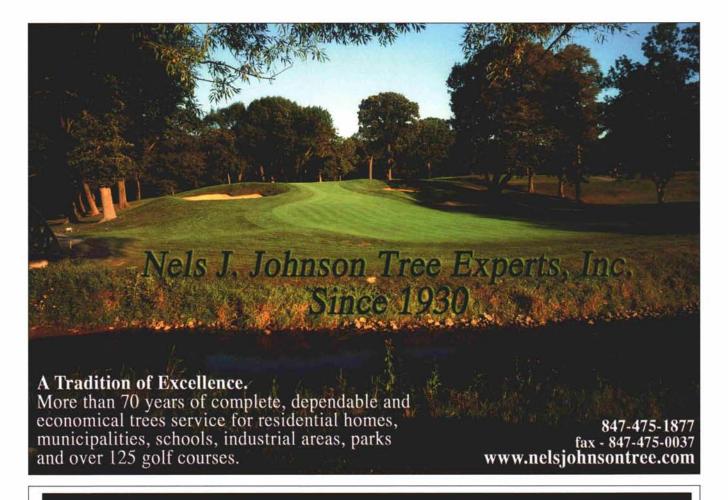
During Board meetings in August and September, the individual Board members and staff were asked to fill out a chapter assessment. This assessment asks questions about every possible facet of an organization. The results of the assessment will serve as information to be utilized during a strategic planning meeting on December 9 at the Midwest Golf House in Lemont. The meeting will be facilitated by a representative from GCSAA, free of charge as a service of GCSAA. From discussion generated during this planning meeting, our chapter will:

- Develop a mission and vision statement.
- Identify the constituents it serves.
- Complete an environmental scan to identify strengths, challenges, opportunities and risks to the chapter.
- Discuss future goals and objectives, and then select two to three specific goals and objectives to be completed in the coming year.
- Develop strategies and assign specific tasks to committees to help achieve those goals and objectives.
- Learn how to involve all members in successfully launching and completing the strategic plan.
- Use tools to ensure that the plan evolves and continues to meet the needs of the membership as the Association's priorities and goals change.

GCSAA will then provide outcomes of the planning session and a draft business plan.

I look forward to sharing the goals with the membership during an upcoming monthly meeting.

Have a great holiday season, everyone!



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Managing Our Money for Future Success

I know this article will appear in the December issue and by the time it lands in your mailbox, by the grace of God or the "hanging chad," I will be the new vice president of MAGCS. Being the treasurer/secretary for the past year has given me a different perspective on how this Association is organized and budgeted. I have to give thanks to Kevin DeRoo, Fred Behnke and Luke Cella for their support in being patient with my ideas, and I am really looking forward to working with Phil Zeinert as our new president.

Even with so much information at our disposal, putting together a plan for the upcoming year always feels a bit like a leap of faith.

As you are reading this magazine, winter is upon us and hopefully the golf course is ready for bed, all the snow mold application is done and the irrigation system has been blown out. Now you can reflect on your future goals and objectives, knowing how successful this past golf season was because of good budgeting and sound forecasting. BAM!!! Oh no!!! Budgeting for the holiday season is upon us, sorry. It seems that budgeting and forecasting are always on our minds, whether at work or at home. We are constantly tinkering with the budget by taking funds from Peter to pay Paul and trying to forecast into the near future. Forecasting is the realization that at times, you have no control. There are too many unforeseen variables that rob your budget. Even with so much information at our disposal, putting together a plan for the upcoming year always feels a bit like a leap of faith.

With respect to the Midwest, there are definitely changes in the wind, all with direct or indirect impact on finances. As I reflect on this past year, one trend has been some great ideas coming out of the Board of Directors that will both test and fine-tune our budget. Both Fred Behnke and Kevin DeRoo have set higher standards to maximize and manage the MAGCS budget. President Phil Zeinert will have a greater foothold in establishing a better use of our budget.

Changes have already taken place, though. By transferring our funds from Harris Bank to Fifth Third Bank, we have accessed improved online banking capabilities, established a bank card for purchasing and simplified record-keeping. Luke Cella has also streamlined our budget for better efficiency in terms of dealing with the cash flow idiosyncrasies of our magazine. Other improvements that will be implemented in 2005 include better public relations, or getting the word out—both Phil and I know this needs improvement—and upgrading the Midwest Turf Clinic with a different assortment of speakers to better cater to our membership's needs and wants.

As with any budget, whether it is for a golf course or household, we will need to make some changes that will reflect the direction the MAGCS will take. There will be more emphasis put on each individual budget item, which will allow this Association to seek greater diversity and better serve our membership needs.

Of course, the MAGCS is also carefully watching our reserve fund. Larry Tomaszewski from AXA Advisors, LLC advised me that our investments essentially stayed where they were prior to the election while the market has been volatile. The mutual funds are down 8.5% from our original investment, but over the last year-and-a-half, the account is up approximately 29%. I will bring back Larry Tomaszewski early next year to

(continued on page 20)



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On Course Contributing Writer

Where Do I Go From Here?

Maybe it is appropriate that I was asked to write on this topic for December. The unfortunate knock on the door or call to the office that could signify a "new beginning" for you often comes at year's end. The employer has decided that it is time for a change. There is no longer a need for your services. They are looking to go in a new direction. Whatever the reason, what you knew is no longer. Your life will forever be changed. Whether the outcome is good, bad or indifferent, rest assured: Your life will be changed.

Sometimes we can prepare ourselves because we are notified well in advance. Sometimes it is a complete surprise. Whatever course the process takes, the results and your reaction are the same. You wonder, why me? What did I do wrong? What can I do to keep my job? Where do I go from here?

"Change is good" is a mantra we frequently hear, but we are never fully prepared for change. Maybe it is the uncertainty. Maybe it is the new routine. After the mourning period, it is time to move on. It is your life, your career, your future and *your responsibility*. You can sit back and sulk because someone was unfair to you or "grab the bull by the horns" and build a future that is of your choice.

Let's begin the process. Of course, before you can tackle "what do I do next," there is the critical matter of "what do I do first"—before change is upon you.

"Change is good" is a mantra we frequently hear, but we are never fully prepared for change.

Financials/Benefits/Income

Make sure your financials and benefits are in order. The following are areas that should be addressed and understood before crisis looms.

Fortify cash reserves or emergency dollars. Make sure your emergency dollars are sufficient and will provide for an extended period of non-employment. Do not under- or overfund your reserves. Rule of thumb is to keep three months' expenses in reserve cash.

Know all your options regarding taking control of *your* dollars accumulated in the company-sponsored retirement programs. All programs are not the same. Discuss your options with your financial professional and/or company benefits person.

In case of an emergency, know how to access dollars from companysponsored retirement programs. Penalties and federal/state withholding may be an unfortunate mistake if not properly distributed.

Know all your options. It is best to plan under controlled conditions versus uncontrollable need. Nothing has to be done immediately.

Do not do this alone! Contact your financial professional, accountant, etc. Have a professional guide you in the proper direction.

If you have a contract with your employer, know it from top to bottom. Don't learn about the ins and outs of your agreement after it's too late.

Know your options regarding continued health insurance coverage (COBRA, Illinois Continuation, short-term health insurance, individual policy with higher deductibles, etc.).

Look into unemployment insurance. Are you entitled to this benefit? How do you go about enrolling in this benefit?

(continued on page 9)

DO YOU EVER HAVE TO GROW GRASS IN A HURRY?

- I Is it tough to keep enough grass on your practice tee?
- I A week after a repair do your divots look like grass or sand?
- I How do your fairways hold up under heavy use?
- I How does your turf endure very dry conditions?

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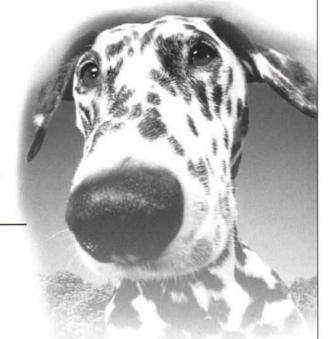
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Growing Smarter.

The Severance Package

Everything is negotiable! Yes! Everything is negotiable. From the minute your fate is determined by your previous employer, it is time for you to negotiate the best severance package for yourself. These severance programs are not etched in stone. In most cases, they are customized based on the individual, reason for departure, length of service and the relationship this individual had with the previous employer.

Some points that should be included in any negotiations are: length of salary continuation, health insurance coverage (paid by previous employer), unpaid bonuses, company contributions to retirement programs, elimination of vesting schedules, state unemployment, outplacement assistance, etc.

Outplacement companies are located around the Chicago area and around the country. The fees are a negotiable tool and can be paid by the previous employer, usually in a lump sum payment (in most cases—part of the severance package). These companies will assist you with writing your resumé, networking, letter-writing to future employers, the interview process, library of reference materials, building contacts, etc. The best feature of outplacement companies, though, is that you are with a number of individuals who are going through the same process of finding work. It makes the entire process a little bit easier.

Remember, in a good economy and a solid industry, for every \$10,000 you make it will require at least one month of job searching. If you make \$70,000, there is a good chance that you will be out of work at least seven months.

If you don't ask for some of these benefits, you will never know whether they might have been available to you. Remember! This is your previous employer. You have *earned* the right to ask for these extra benefits.

Okay! We were prepared for the unexpected, although these days "the unexpected" occurs way too often. Even if your financials are completely in order and you have negotiated an outstanding severance package, you still need to consider: What do I do now? What is my next step?

What Do I Want to Do?

Well! You really do have a number of options and a number of questions to ask yourself. Do you . . . stay in the industry. Leave the industry. Stay in the state. Leave the state. Work for the suppliers. Start a totally new career. Go back to school. Start your own business. Become a consultant. Ask yourself what it is that you really want to do. What will bring you enjoyment? What type of career do you want?

Do your research! Talk with your peers. What are your options? Talk with your spouse or significant other. Can you relocate or do you have location restrictions? Are there age restrictions? Financial restrictions? Do you need to work full-time? Do other concerns (such as health insurance coverage) create a quicker need to begin a new career? These are just a few considerations that might be circling in your head. Take your time. Think things through. It's okay to change your mind. Evaluate your options. Once you have decided, go with it.

How Do I Get Started?

Who do you talk to? Everyone and anyone! NETWORK, NETWORK!

More than 80% of the new careers today are found through networking. If your choice is to find a position similar to the one you've lost, work for the suppliers, start your own business or launch a totally new career, the best way to begin the process is through NETWORKING.

Finding a new career is an eight-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week endeavor. Don't shortchange your goal! Create a plan. I am going to network two days. I am going to send out 50 resumés. I am going to call 25 of my associates. Create a sense of urgency.

Stay involved in your groups and association. Keep in touch with your peers. Talk to the parents on your children's sports teams. Keep in touch with the people at your previous employer. What about PTO, civic or church groups, etc.? Don't leave a stone unturned. If people like you, they will want to help you.

Do your research!
Talk with your
peers. What are
your options?

Lucky, or maybe unlucky, are the ones who have never gone through the process of career change. Finding a new career is a great way to review current friendships, build new relationships and go outside your comfort level. It may seem unusual and strange, but these are the relationships that will lay the groundwork for your next career. Embrace it! Build it! Nurture it! The people with whom you meet, talk and discuss your future are the people that will help you find your new career.

It may seem corny, but the saying today is "Givers gain." Give of your time! Give of your knowledge! Be a good listener! Get involved! Talk about your situation and where you want to be in the future. The person or group that may end up helping you with your new career may be someone you least expect. That's why it is so important to keep talking about what you want and where you want to be.

Spend time on your resumé. Sit and jot down your work history and educational background (especially extra degrees and designations). Where did you work? What did you accomplish? How many people did you manage? How big of a budget did you work with? How did you reduce business expenses? How did you expand the business? Create various resumés depending on the position you are looking for. Have your peers, friends and family provide input on your resumé. Constructive criticism will go a long way.

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Keep a Positive Attitude!

Take your time. Don't begin looking for your next career until your anger, unhappiness, disgust, sadness, inadequacies, etc. dissipate. Once you have a clear mind, jump into the career-search process with a passion.

Keep upbeat! Keep an even keel! Keep doing the things that will put you in position for your next career!

Talk with your associates. Let them know your situation. But most of all, let them know what you want. If you haven't been frequenting meetings in the past, it is time to change that.

Don't be ashamed. You will be amazed at the number of your peers, friends and associates that have gone through or are going through this process. They will help you make it through this change. Don't do this alone!

It Is My Life!

This process will open your eyes to a new person . . . someone who will take control of his life and future. Someone who is willing to address uncertainty and run with it. That someone could and should be you!



Author's Note

Thanks to the input from numerous individuals who have gone through these career and lifestyle changes and are happier, successful and living the life that they want. Lucky, or maybe unlucky, are the ones who have never gone through the process of career change. Finding a new career is a great way to review current friendships, build new relationships and go outside your comfort level.

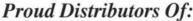


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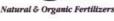


















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