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An aerial view of Soldier Field, site of the MAGCS March monthly meeting.
(Photo by Lee Hogan, courtesy Chicago Bears.)

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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

For the Good of the Game

I hope everyone had a safe trip to Orlando and productive time spent at the Golf Industry Show. The National Golf Course Owners Association, the Golf Course Builders Association of America and the American Society of Golf Course Architects joined the GIS for 2005. And interest is high for the Golf Range Association of America and the National Golf Foundation to join during 2006. The Club Managers Association of America has already committed to join in 2007.

The mission of The First Tee is to work with local not-for-profit entities and municipalities in the formation of facilities and First Tee chapters, where participating youth can learn not only golf but also the life skills that will assist these children for years to come.

The educational offerings to the associations remain separate, but in the future look for some great educational offerings that appeal to several associations. And the show floor is more organized with the solution-centers concept. When one realizes that many of the vendors that attend the GIS have also been attending other golf-related association shows, it is evident that one of the main driving forces for a consolidated show floor is the huge savings to be incurred by vendors attending one show instead of multiples. Besides, we will all welcome the smell on the show floor associated with great food when the CMAA joins the GIS in 2007.

There is another alliance that needs some mention: the World Golf Foundation. The PGA Tour launched this foundation in 1994 to oversee the establishment of a World Golf Hall of Fame. And when other, allied golf associations joined in the effort, a new umbrella organization took shape to facilitate collaboration among the associations. The new mission of the foundation became "to unite the golf industry and those who love the game in support of initiatives that promote, enhance the growth of, and provide access to the game of golf, while preserving golf's traditional values and also passing them on to others."

The First Tee, a primary initiative of the WGF, was started in 1997. The mission of The First Tee is to work with local not-for-profit entities and municipalities in the formation of facilities and First Tee chapters, where participating youth can learn not only golf but also the life skills that will assist these children for years to come. One of the most successful First Tee programs is The First Tee Junior Program of Aurora. The City of Aurora and the Fox Valley Park District run this program cooperatively. At first, during 1998, 200 youth participated in the summer program; the favorable response allowed the program to be expanded year-round as part of the physical education program in the public and parochial schools. Since 1998, more than 3,000 youth have been introduced to the game of golf.

The golfing portion of the program takes place on a three-hole junior course at Phillips Park. Superintendent Todd Schmitz says that the kids utilize several stations at the driving range, and the nursery green also serves as the putting green. Todd's office area is in close proximity to that of Jim David, coordinator of The First Tee program. Jim expresses that the entire community embraced this program, which is key to their success. Not only are youth engaged in golf at an early age, many of the youth continue with the program from year to year and are ultimately gaining access to golf courses throughout the Fox Valley area. The success of this program has caught the attention of the media and CLTV will air this success story. You can check out the success of this program at www.aurora-il.org.

The community of Aurora will serve as a benchmark for other communities that wish to introduce golf and life skills to their youth. This truly is for the good of the game.



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Advocacy and Compliance: What's It All About?

Our Association has formed a new committee this year. It is the Advocacy and Compliance Committee. This committee has taken the place of the Environmental Committee. As a new member on the Board of Directors, I was handed this committee and asked myself, and the Board, "Advocacy and compliance? What is it all about?"

Building relationships and getting to know our lawmakers are among the most important ways our Association can influence government actions that affect our jobs as golf course superintendents.

I contacted the director of information and public policy with the GCSAA after spending some time on the Advocacy and Compliance section of the GCSAA Web site. The GCSAA was encouraged to see our Association become proactive in becoming an effective advocate for the golf course management profession and sent me information to assist us in doing so. Their plan addressed three main objectives—communicating with lawmakers, building relationships with your lawmakers, and issue management—and presented ways to accomplish each objective.

Communicating with lawmakers is key. Believe it or not, for lawmakers to make informed decisions, they want to hear from their constituents. It is said that whether it is a letter, e-mail or phone call, that one communication is equal to hearing from 100 voters. Given the size of our Association, that letter or phone call would mean that much more. Stating our views and asking for legislators' positions lets both sides know where each stands on an issue. Once an issue has arisen, other ways to communicate with lawmakers are by writing a position statement or position paper, or testifying at a hearing. These are more formal forms of communication and would constitute a statement or declaration of our Association's policy on a particular issue. A position paper may also include additional information called "backgrounder papers" in an attempt to more fully explain specific issues and may originate from various sources. Even though legislators may not support our position on a particular issue or bill, they may the next time. The open line of communication is the important tool.

Building relationships and getting to know our lawmakers are among the most important ways our Association can influence government actions that affect our jobs as golf course superintendents. Inviting lawmakers to your property for a "golf course tour" is a great way to build relationships and teach them about our work. This gives superintendents the chance to showcase efforts made on environmental practices on the golf course. We can also invite lawmakers to speak at our chapter meetings as another way to build relationships. This sends a message that we care about their work AND helps them accomplish their goals by providing an opportunity to address their constituents. Don't forget the camera—both such events would make great photo opportunities for press releases. Lawmakers are usually eager to speak and having frequent contact with them will start to establish golf course superintendents as a good source of information on decisions they have to make.

Once we know who our lawmakers are and have open lines of communication with them, we will be in a better position to manage issues at the local level when the situation arises. We now have outlined a plan to assist us in managing local issues. The first step in this process will be to organize potential

(continued on page 6)

allies familiar with or affected by the issue and develop a plan to define the objective. Once this is accomplished, it is time to develop tactics to put the plan into action. Using the different forms of media to get the message out is very helpful. Media coverage, letters to the editor, and trade press contacts are all good avenues to building support for our issue. If the legislative or regulatory issue will make a huge impact on our industry, hiring a professional lobbyist may be the next move. Managing a piece of legislation or negotiating a regulation can be very time-consuming. A professional lobbyist can spend the time needed to get an important measure passed, amended or killed.

This all may seem like a lot to digest and is only a brief overview. I have more information than I could possibly include in this article, unless I wanted to put you to sleep (I haven't already done so, have I?). My goal here was to share the highlights. The point is, the GCSAA represents us as an Association at the national and local levels on many issues. With

government wanting to regulate industry more and more, we as an Association need to assist them on the local level by starting to develop relationships with lawmakers that will enable us to voice our opinions, educate lawmakers and develop representation on issues that affect our industry.



*Communicating
with lawmakers
is key.*

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The author.

ASK THE "EXPERT"

Justin Wheeler *Prairie Landing Golf Club*

How to Defeat Those Annoying Pop-Ups

Many Web surfers have had the misfortune of being confronted by what seems like an advertisement that pops up in their Web browser. Many are learning that these ads are actually not coincidental. Sometimes these ads are showing up because users are running software on their own computers that put these ads on the screen.

Ridding your computer of pop-up ads and spyware and other malwares is a very long and tedious process. Knowing what causes the problems can help to eliminate some of the problems.

"Spyware," "adware" and "malware" are words working their way into many computer users' vocabularies. These are small software programs that can record information about where you search, surf and even what you buy, and then send it back to some less-than-ethical advertisers. The more you are on the Internet, the more software that gets downloaded onto your system and the more ads and pop-ups you see. This will inevitably slow down even the newest, fastest computers.

Beating spyware and the like is a long process. The simplest way is to remove the sources of these programs and then prevent them from returning. I personally use two very good programs, both of which are free. You can find both Spybot Search & Destroy, as well as AdAware SE, at <http://www.download.com>. These programs are free and work very well together. Running these programs on a weekly basis will remove most of your problems and prevent many of the pop-up ads that usually plague so many computer users.

Understanding how these little programs get into computers is a little more complex. One way is through your very own Internet browser, Internet Explorer (IE). IE is built with ActiveX, a technology that originally was designed to make keeping your computer up-to-date easy. ActiveX is what allows the Windows Update program that is run from Microsoft's Web site to access your computer and recognize if you have the most recent service pack or if you need the newest version of some bundled program like IE or Media Player. Needless to say, programmers started to learn that if ActiveX worked in the background at Microsoft's Web site, they could get it to work in the background of other Web sites to download other information. This other information communicates in the background with an ad server that sends you ads and other annoying information. Some of these programs will even skew the results of search engines to show items for sale and your searched item at specific Web sites.

The single best way to escape this problem is to use a different Internet browser that does not use ActiveX and actively blocks pop-up information. Even the Department of Homeland Security recommends using a different Web browser due to the security vulnerabilities of IE (<http://www.kb.cert.org/vuls/id/713878>). Many different, very good browsers exist. My personal favorite is Mozilla's Firefox, available at <http://www.getfirefox.com>.

Spyware and the like also get into computers through online chat programs like Windows Messenger, AOL Instant Messenger and Yahoo Messenger. It is fun to talk to friends who are miles away and many kids stay up late talking to friends, but some of the computer glitches that are going around now are sneaking in through the chat programs.

(continued on page 9)



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Spyware also sneaks onto computers through some of the music and file-exchange programs. Some of these programs, like KaZaa, will run free but run with ads to help pay the bills. These ads are targeted to the user and will report information back to the ad-servers.

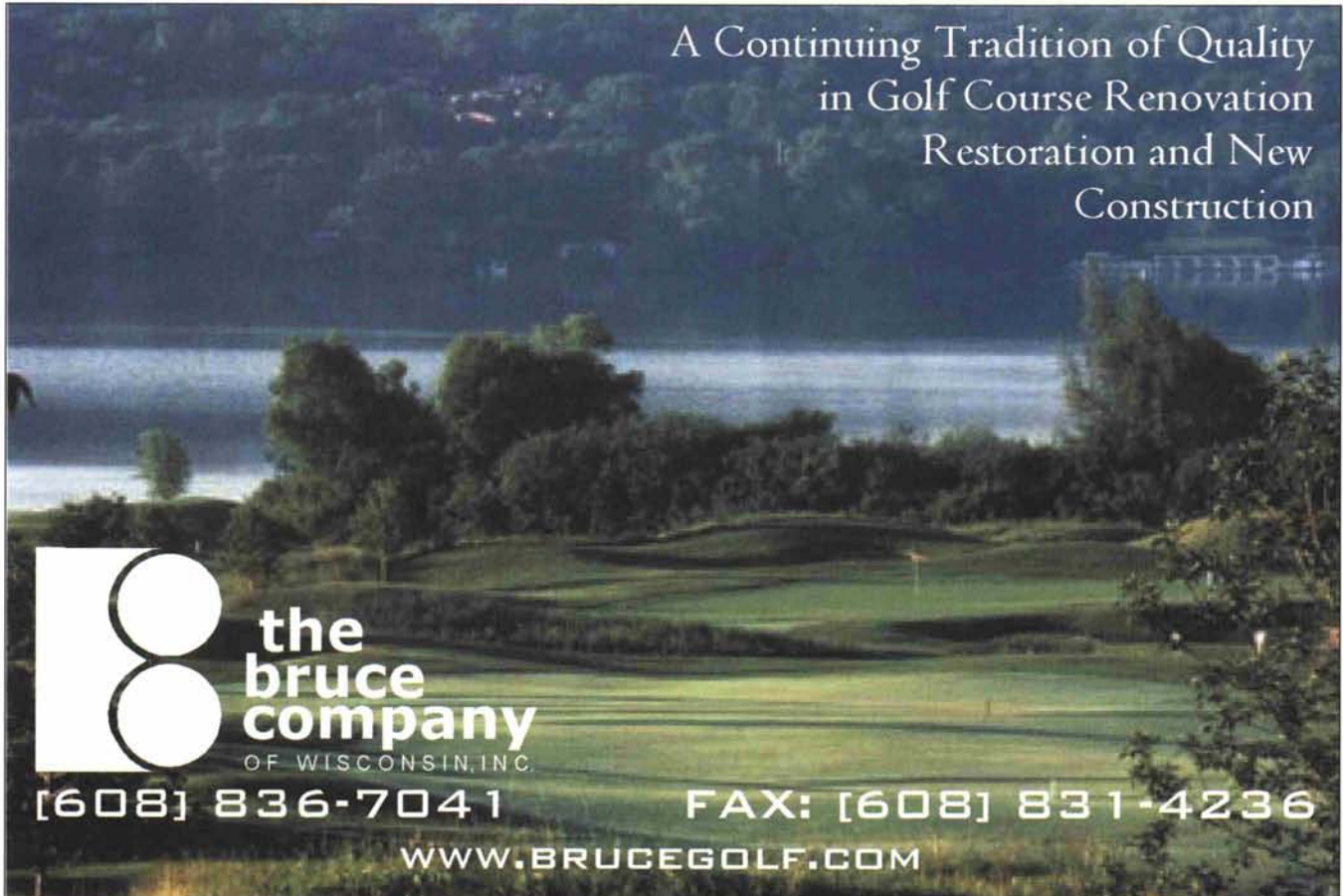
Ridding your computer of pop-up ads and spyware and other malwares is a very long and tedious process. Knowing what causes the problems can help to eliminate some of the problems. I've been asked by many friends how to fix their com-


puters and how to prevent it from happening again. Some people don't like losing their chat programs or learning a new Web browser, but they are quite grateful when they can go a whole month and tell me they haven't had a pop-up or a slowdown yet.



*Beating spyware
and the like
is a long process.*

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