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Photography by: TomEubank.com

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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.

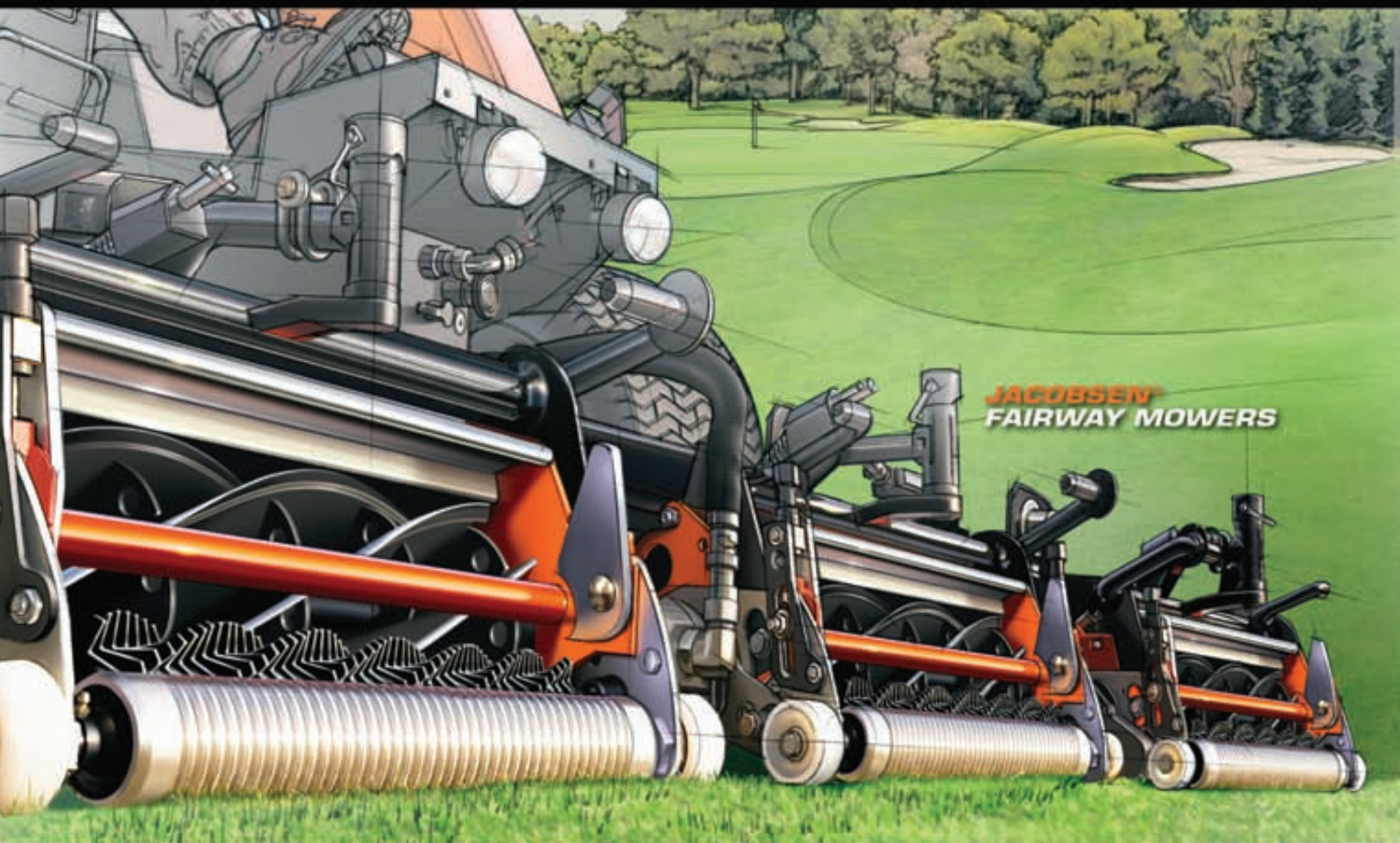
The MAGCS member is also an environmental steward. We strive to uphold and enhance our surroundings by promoting flora and fauna in every facet in a manner that is beneficial to the general public now and in the future.

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# WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME??!!

*We live in a world where many believe that "One good deed deserves another." Often this is translated into, "If I do A-B-C for you...you do X-Y-Z for me," and all is right with the W.I.F.M. universe, right? I am here to tell you that some of the most valuable experiences you will ever gain in your lifetime, you'll get from **volunteering**. Whether you expect something or nothing in return, you'll receive more than you ever imagined.*

So what's in it for you? Here are some reasons to volunteer:

### **Learn or develop a new skill**

Volunteering can be the perfect vehicle for discovering something you are really good at or for developing a new job skill. You might even improve your job opportunities. Just because you have finished your education and are employed, doesn't mean you should stop taking on new challenges. Almost one quarter (23%) of people say they volunteer to develop new skills.

- 82% of younger volunteers, ages 15 to 24, report gaining increased communication skills
- 49% of employed people said their volunteer activities gave them new skills that they could apply directly to their job
- 77% of the same group greatly improved their interpersonal skills

Who knows, you might even discover that you love writing articles for *On Course*!

### **Be a part of your community**

Everywhere we turn, there are opportunities to serve. I am not just talking about the MAGCS. I am talking about your kid's school, local food pantries, community outreach programs, and faith based organizations. Volunteering in these arenas is about helping others and having an impact on people's wellbeing.

### **Motivation and sense of achievement**

Volunteers experience a sense of achievement and motivation that comes from their enthusiasm and desire to help. All this is done of your own accord. When we volunteer we give of ourselves, and it has an overwhelmingly positive effect on the psyche.

### **Boost your career options**

A survey carried out by TimeBank through Reed Executive showed that among 200 leading businesses

- 73% of employers would recruit a candidate with volunteering experience over one without
- 94% of employers believe that volunteering can add to skills
- 94% of employees who had volunteered in order to learn new skills had benefited either by getting their first job, improving their salary, or being promoted

Did I get your attention yet, or are my statistics boring you?

### **New interests and hobbies**

As golf course superintendents we have the potential to get wrapped up in the world of "Turf" and everything golf. Volunteering can provide an escape from everyday routine and create balance in our lives. Finding new interests and hobbies can be fun, relaxing, and energizing. Sometimes a volunteer experience can lead you to something you never even thought about or help you discover a new interest.

### **New experiences**

Volunteering is a brilliant way to get life experience. The beauty of it is that it gives back in peculiar ways. Over time, the benefits seep into who we are as individuals. It helps define our character, our passion, and our ability to be a part of something bigger than ourselves.

### **Meeting a diverse range of people**

Volunteering brings together a diverse range of people from all backgrounds and walks of life. Both the recipients of your efforts and your fellow volunteers can be a source of inspiration and a means to develop your interpersonal skills. It also offers an incredible networking opportunity. Not only will you develop lasting personal and professional relationships, but

*(continued on page 4)*



it's also a great way to learn about people from all walks of life, different environments, and new industries. You can never tell who you will meet, what new information you will learn, and what impact this could have on your life.

### Send a signal to your employer, teachers, friends and family

People pay attention to your life outside the environment in which they have direct contact with you. For example, your employer would be interested in the activities that give you a good work-life balance, just as academic institutions are interested in your extra-curricular activities. Volunteering reflects and supports a complete picture of you and gives real examples of your commitment, dedication, and interests.

### So consider volunteering!

The end of the season is fast approaching, so take advantage of the slow months this winter. Get involved somewhere, somehow. The intangibles of your volunteer experiences will stay with you for a lifetime. It's worth it. That's what's in it for you!

-OC

### References:

*Ten Professional Development Benefits of Volunteering (Everything I Learned in Life I Learned Through Volunteering).* Mary V. Merrill, LSW, Merrill Associates. *TimeBank Volunteer Research.* World Volunteerweb. *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating.*

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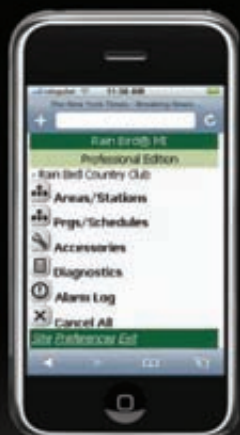
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## Dave Braasch -N-



*Dave Braasch will be hosting his fourth MAGCS golf event in September. He hosted two meetings at Hughes Creek Golf Club in Elburn, Illinois, and one at Glen Erin, in Janesville, Wisconsin, in 2004.*

The golf course at Glen Erin Golf Club requires a unique set of management practices. The soils on the property are sandy and rocky gravel. Dave has found that wetting agents are an important tool in managing those rocky, sandy soils. He stressed that water management was a key to taking care of the course. With the soil types and windy conditions he has found that he has to water a lot more than other superintendents in the area. Dave likes to keep the course looking green. The irrigation system has been expanded to water areas that previously were unirrigated.

When it comes to aerifying the sand L-93/Providence greens at Glen Erin, Dave uses quarter-inch tines four times a year. He does two aerifications in both spring and fall, with the aerifications spaced two weeks apart.

Dave tells me the 12th green is performing much better after a company was brought in to consult on the amount of light that was hitting the green. Some tree removals allowed more sunlight and air movement. He seemed to be very happy about the improvement.

The 30 acres of fairways and two acres of tees are predominantly low-mow bluegrass maintained at one-half inch. The fairways are sprayed with hardly any fungicides. Dave has done some experimenting with different rates of the herbicide Tenacity™ to control bentgrass in the bluegrass fairways.

Dave also stresses that communicating to the golfers about certain management practices is important. The membership at Glen Erin Golf Club has been very supportive, especially during the first few seasons as the young course was establishing and maturing.

June 23rd was the fifth anniversary of the opening of Glen Erin Golf Club. Several of the staff of 11 have been at Glen Erin since the grow-in, including the assistant superintendent/equipment technician, Dave Hale. A staff appreciation season-end cookout is held annually. Dave says the staff seems to want to cook what they want and cook it their way.

Fishing is a hobby that Dave enjoys in his leisure time away from work. He is planning a post-Labor Day fishing trip to northern Wisconsin. He has also found out that some local superintendents have opened the golf course lakes to fishing due to overpopulation. He is looking forward to introducing his three-year old son, Logan, to fishing and golf.

Dave hopes those who attended the 2004 golf event at Glen Erin will return this year in order to see and enjoy how the course has established and evolved. He is tempted to set up hole #2

as a challenging 225 yard par 3. Also, not back, by popular demand, is the toll booth at the front entrance gate. The relaxed Wisconsin country setting of the course at Glen Erin Golf Club won't disappoint anyone who comes out this September. **-OC**

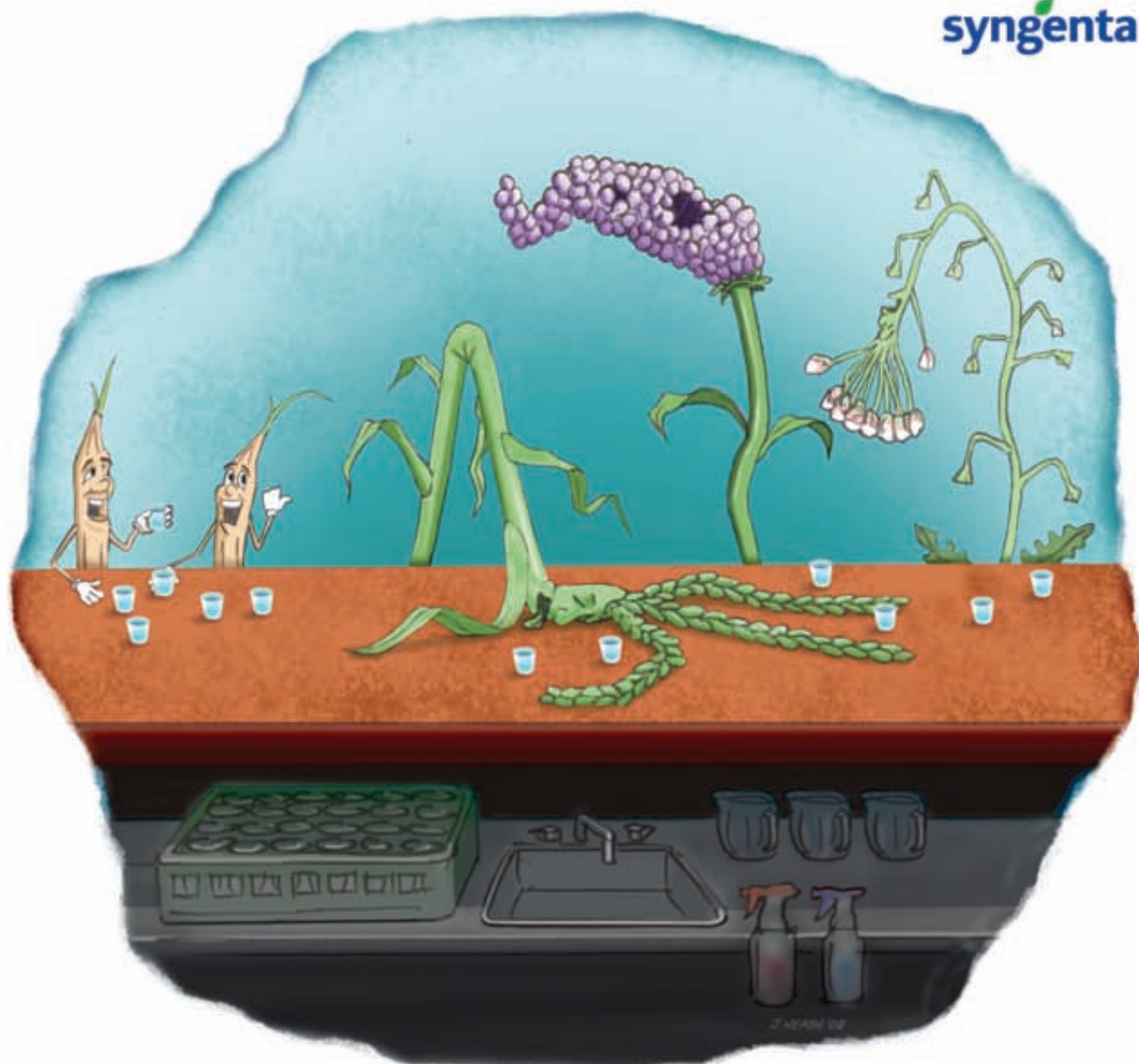


*MAGCS President, Dave Braasch and three year old son, Logan.*









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# Decoder Systems Discussed

*Changes in technology have occurred at a rapid pace in the irrigation business. Here in the Chicago region we see irrigation systems that run the gamut from manual systems that utilize spigots to control the flow of water to top-of-the-line computer-controlled modern systems that can be accessed and controlled via the internet and hand-held radio. In the beginning, irrigation consisted of some type of valve near an area that required water such as a green. Pressure was supplied by elevating the water into a storage device such as a water tower. You could attach a hose to the valve, but even then, some sort of distribution device was still required.*

In 1933, a patent was awarded for the initial design of what we now know as the impact sprinkler. Some 20 years later, the idea that thermoplastics could be used to manufacture sprinklers was born. Pumping stations became a viable option for golf courses as well. This eventually led to the development of plastic valves, valve in head sprinklers, and hydraulic and electric controllers. The majority of the development for the components that we now use in modern irrigation has occurred in the last 50 years.

Golf irrigation system components can be loosely grouped into one of three categories: application, distribution, and control. This article will deal primarily with control elements. Satellite control systems are now, and have been, the industry standard in the United States for some time. Satellites are basically locations that house the switches for a number of sprinklers in one spot. The first satellite systems were electromechanical in nature, gear driven "clocks" that kept time and started irrigation by tripping a switch. There are still a number of these electro-mechanical systems in use in our area today.

Soon thereafter the solid-state electronic controller was introduced. Although water and electricity don't often mix well, it has become commonplace to see these boxes full of expensive electronic equipment stationed out on the golf course where rain, irrigation, lightning, vandalism, and sometimes floodwaters can occur. There is a new option, however, that is becoming more accepted for control of golf course irrigation systems—the decoder system.

Decoder systems have been available from golf irrigation manufacturers for some time, but recent improvements have made them a viable option for reliable irrigation control here in the United States. Decoder systems place the switching device either at the sprinkler or in close proximity to it. The objective of this article is to explore the structure of a decoder system and discuss some of the pros and cons associated with these systems.

Although decoder systems are only now gaining some acceptance here in the United States, the decoder system is really not a new idea. The thought that control could reside at each sprinkler instead of a localized control box (satellite) has been around for a long time. In the United States, in the early '70s, John Manville purchased the binar system from Robert Trent Jones. It became one of the first decoder systems made commercially available in the United States. John's Manville sold this system for some time, but had trouble with it, and eventually they stopped selling the product. Since then a number of manufacturers have introduced decoder systems with limited success.

In Europe the decoder system is the standard for irrigation system control. For example, nearly all golf irrigation control systems installed in the British Isles are decoder systems. Even taking into account a difference in the standard of maintenance between the United States and Europe, this is remarkable. These systems seem to function with a degree of success in Europe, but recently we have heard much more about decoder systems here in the United States. Why are decoder systems being brought to the forefront today? In one word the answer is wire, or more to the point, the cost of copper.

## STRUCTURE

So what is a decoder system composed of? The following are the primary elements of any decoder system:

- A central computer connected to wire paths via gateway
- One or more wire paths connecting each decoder to the central computer (these wire paths provide communication AND power)
- Decoders that take a signal and respond based upon that signal
- Solenoids that operate the sprinklers
- Grounding points that protect wire paths from surge

*(continued on page 11)*



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