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Howie Shuck and his father at the MAGCS fund raising event to benefit the Wee One Foundation.

FRONT COVER

Each step you take is one into the future. How will you prepare yourself?
Photo credit: Luke Cella

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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.

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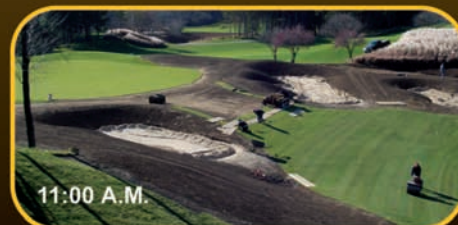


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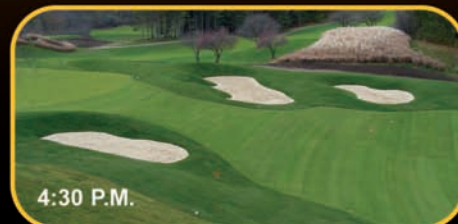
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This is YOUR Committee, Take Advantage of it!

As I type this, we are in the midst of the first big snow storm of 2010, wind chills of -50° have hit the northern areas of North Dakota and a foot or more of snow has fallen in areas of the Midwest. It is days like this when I realize why everyone asks me "... so what do you do in the winter?" For those of us fortunate enough not to have to sit in a plow truck, it is days like this when we have time to think about how we can take advantage of the off season. For the Class C Committee it means planning events for the year and thinking about the best course of action for the Annual Winter Workshop. Many of you reading this are in a position similar to mine. We have been around since 2003 and the first Class C Workshop. In the years that we have attended we have had many people speak to us about our career development. We have been told of ways to guarantee an interview, sure fire interview techniques, trends in hiring, portfolios, web sites, the weather, the number of pages on GCSAA.org, and numerous other items. Given that I have already experienced all those things, it's difficult for me to think of a new way to approach this year's Winter Workshop. Thankfully the committee is made up of a great group of professionals with new and fresh ideas.

The committee decided that staying on the career development track was the best way to go. But how do we make it different and still relevant? It has to be something different for us veteran assistants, but still helpful to the new folks as well. So this year the morning session will focus on interviewing, but with a different spin. We discovered that our own Luke Cella has taught a class on interviewing and some of the dos and don'ts that go along with that. We decided that Luke should conduct mock interviews of one or more

people who will be hand picked and videotaped ahead of time. We will watch the interview(s), have an opportunity to dissect them, and learn a few things that we may not otherwise have realized about the process. The second half of the morning will feature a panel of superintendents who have taken the step up from assistant in the past couple of years. We'll see if they can shine a light into just how you go about standing apart in a group of 10, 25, 100, even 300+ applicants to finally secure that first job and become an SM member.

(continued on next page)



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On a different slant, we are going to make the afternoon a bit more relaxed, loosen up the tie, lose the jacket and get into some small groups. Each group will be led by a member of the Class C Committee. We will have a prepared list of issues and questions to discuss. After some time has been spent in small groups, we will reassemble and discuss the results. What we are hoping to gain from this, ultimately, is a sense of what you want from your Class C Committee. Are there things that we should be doing that aren't happening? Are there things that are happening that shouldn't be? This is your Committee and your Association. Tell us what you want from it. The whole point of the afternoon is to relax, open the communication, and figure out just what the best direction is for the Class C of MAGCS in the future.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say that this is the last action that I will be taking as the Class C Committee Chairman. A few weeks ago I accepted my first Superintendent position at Kenosha Country Club. Until then, being a part of this Committee and working with the Board of Directors of MAGCS was the highlight of my short career. Working with the people on the BOD, all of whom are willing to help and offer advice, has been a true blessing. I first have to thank Past President Dave Braasch who asked me to fill the position in 2008. Next, it was Tony Kalina and, now, Scott Witte. It was my pleasure to work with all of you. I appreciate all that you have done to help me and the Class C succeed. I thank Harry Lovero and Bob Kohlstedt who have allowed the Class C to

be involved in writing for *On Course*. This is a great experience for anyone. I thank all the other Committee Chairs who have continued to ask the Assistant members to help out on their committees as well. Luke Cella has answered more emails from me in the past two years than probably anyone else in my address book and has been a great guide during this process. And finally thank you to John Nelson who for the past four years has been my boss at the Merit Club. He allowed me the time to be active in MAGCS. Many superintendents could learn from that example, and I hope that I am as willing with my own assistants in the future.

Again, thank you to all of MAGCS, for what you have allowed me and all of Class C to be a part of. We are truly fortunate. I look forward to working with all of you again in a few years if asked to become a part of the organization as a Superintendent. **-OC**

EDITOR NOTE: The MAGCS Board of Directors and Membership thank Scott for his service to the Association and offer him our sincere congratulations. We hope to see him serving in a few short years.



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FEATURE I

Robert Fraley, Fox Bend Golf Course

Lessons Learned Along the Way



Last fall I was having difficulty repairing an irrigation leak. Everything was cut to proper length and all the various pieces were ready to be glued, but there was one irritating problem. After many attempts I couldn't quite shut off the isolation valve to the tee where I was working. There was a small steady dripping, just enough that the pipe wouldn't dry and accept the glue. Then I remembered something my old boss, Jim McNair, taught me years earlier. I headed toward the pro shop and said to the attendant, "Ken, I know this is an odd request, but would you by any chance happen to have a couple of hotdog buns?" He headed into the kitchen and returned with the item I needed to finish my project. When I arrived back at the repair site I carefully shoved the bun inside the pipe the water was coming from. This allowed the water to be absorbed while I quickly glued and connected the parts. In no time the break was repaired, the bun dissolved, and water was running to the tee complex again. Later that week I e-mailed Jim and reminded him of the trick he had taught me and how I was able to put it to use. He replied that he had shown another employee this same method, but the employee misunderstood and shoved the bun, wrapper and all, into the pipe. Oooops! Jim taught me to expect rain later in the day if there was no dew on the grass in the morning. He taught me how to look for localized dry spots, how to sharpen and adjust a reel. He showed me a strong work ethic. He introduced me to the golf course business, and he taught me how to snow ski.

I can recall Dan Sterr locating a drain line with just two metal wires. I was curious as to how it worked, and he showed me how he did it. Take two lengths of wire and bend each into an "L" shape. Insert each into an aerifying tine. Hold the tines loosely in your hand and walk back and forth over the area where you think the drain line might be. Mark with paint where the two wires cross. Many times over the years I have been able to find a pipe or a drain line in this manner. Don't ask me to try and explain the science behind it, all I know is it works! During the season I will run across knots which I like to call "double-half tangles." I smile to myself and take the time to show an employee the "clove hitch" that Dan taught me as we worked together putting out rope and stakes years ago. Dan taught me to calibrate a sprayer, how to prepare for tournaments, and how to clean up after a two-week flood. He helped to show me how important good drainage is to a golf course. Many summers we spent putting in drainage. Whenever I see Dan he still asks me, "How's number five fairway draining, Bob?"

*"Tell me and I forget,
show me and I remember,
involve me and I understand."*

-Anonymous

There are two inevitable questions whenever someone finds out I work at a golf course. The first one is, "What do you do in the winter?" After I graciously explain to them that I actually am kept pretty busy through the winter months, they hit me with their next question. "I have moles in my yard and I've tried everything: bubble gum, soda pop, garden hoses. None of it works. What can I do?" I always respond with what I like to call the "Bob Kohlstedt Tried and True Mole Relocation Method." All it requires is two shovels, a heavy foot, and lots of patience.

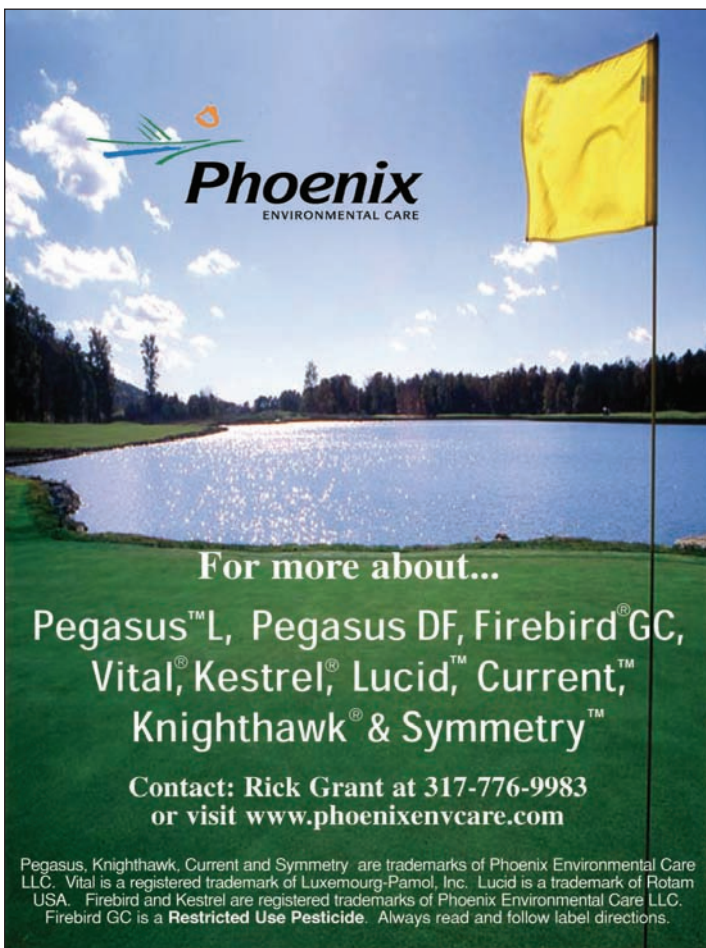
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If, while driving around the course, you notice fresh mole damage, the first thing to do is step it down. You wait patiently until you see new activity. Quickly shove the first shovel into the ground behind the mole to block the tunnel. Then, use the other shovel to pop it out. After capturing the furry fellow, it's time to "relocate" it. Now, I have to confess that, lacking the patience needed, I have never caught a mole this way. However, I have watched Bob catch many moles with this method. It is the most effective method I've seen. I wish I had kept a tally over the years. One of the most important things Bob taught me though was never to be afraid of a challenge. If something isn't working properly or you are faced with a problem, don't be afraid of trying to fix it yourself. He told me that a place where he had worked didn't have the budget to hire out, so they were encouraged to do repairs themselves. I watched and learned as Bob split a John Deere tractor in half to replace a clutch. Last winter, along with our mechanic Bill, he helped me to restore an old Toro 300 Greensmaster. I learned to mediate disputes in a quiet respectful manner by watching Bob. Since I have known Bob he has always shown support and encouragement and listened to other ideas while never looking over my shoulder. His office is always open, and his friendship is well valued.

There have been others. Art Benson showed me the value in tree selection. "Plant them small, Bob. They'll pass up the larger planted tree in a few years and be healthier for it." One fall while driving by a patch of grass which was infested with rust spores, he explained to me that it is common on newly seeded grass the first year. Harry Lovero showed me that if you respect your employees they'll respect you. I had the good fortune to work with Leon and Carole Anne McNair, Jim's brother and sister-in-law, for over twenty years. They always treated me and their other employees and co-workers as family for which I have always been appreciative.

One of the great things about life is the people you meet along the way. The individuals I have mentioned all helped me through the years by what they taught me—not so much by what they said, but by their example. An education provides you with knowledge, but it is the people that are the real gift.

-OC



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As a Superintendent, What is Your Next Career Step?

At a time when disposable income is on a downward slide, most of us have experienced the negative impact in our workplaces. In the public sector, the middle class golfer is watching the amount he spends on leisure. Perhaps he opts to save those dollars or use them to spend more time with family. Park districts and municipalities are looking to golf courses to cut expenses because of lower tax revenues. Private clubs are experiencing membership loss from individual and corporate members alike.

With all that being said, is it enough for you to simply be the Golf Course Superintendent? Should you be looking to help out with the management of the club as a whole? Or, if the opportunity arises, will your director or general manager come to you and ask you to step up? Many clubs are already operating successfully without a traditional general manager. Others are restructuring to eliminate upper level positions or merging departments in the interest of saving money. If that happens at your club, are you the one they're going to turn to? Is that a more viable career move than trying to move to a higher level club? I spoke with three superintendents who have taken on a larger role at their clubs.

Dave Radaj, CGCS, Green Acres Country Club

Like many superintendents who move up in the club's management structure, Dave had been at Green Acres for a number of years. The club was in the midst of putting in a new pool and in the planning phases of a clubhouse and golf course renovation. It was at this time, in meetings with engineers, that the club realized Dave's skills weren't limited to the course. While working out the landscaping, Dave noticed that the arrangement of the new pool didn't allow for it. As a result the club, Dave, and the engineers changed the plans, so they allowed members to walk around the pool and still include landscaping.

Shortly after the pool project was finished, the club was scheduled to undergo clubhouse and course renovations that would close the entire club for a year. It was then that Dave was asked to take over as GM and run both projects until they reopened. They would then hire a new GM. The projects were a great success, and the club was very pleased with the work that was done, enough so that they offered Dave the permanent position of General Manager. Some Superintendents may think of this as a dream offer. After all, the GM has a great job, right?

They make more money. Because they are the boss, they can come and go as they please. They get to sit in a big cushy chair in an air conditioned office – perfect.

Dave truly enjoyed many aspects of the “temporary” position, working with the clubhouse staff and the business side of club management, and seeing a new side of the club were things that Dave liked about the GM role. With all the new challenges and positive aspects of the position, there were a few negatives as well, and those were deal breakers. First was the Food and Beverage side. Green Acres is a high-end private club, and fine dining is an absolute necessity. That means knowing wine and food pairings, along with a plethora of other information that isn't part of a Superintendent's education. The other issue, which was of greater importance, was the time away from family. A club wants the GM to be around during dinner service, holidays, evenings on weekends, etc., and for Dave nothing was worth that sacrifice. As a result he thankfully declined the offer to remain as General Manager. The club was happy to have him as the Superintendent and hired a new GM with a strong Food and Beverage background, which worked out well for all involved.

Even though this wasn't an overall great experience, Dave says there were lessons to be learned:

- Be a team player. Just because the club bought a new oven instead of a fairway mower, don't take it personally. It's a full service club, and all areas need to fire at full efficiency in order to serve the members.
- Don't jump to criticism about how others operate their area of the club. They have to provide a service just as you do.
- Keep a working relationship with other managers, and don't be afraid to mention issues to them that may need attention.

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Ron Fox, CGCS/GM, Point O'Woods Golf and Country Club

Just around the lake in Benton Harbor, Michigan, Ron Fox has been Superintendent at Point O'Woods since January of 1999. In that time he has raised the level of conditioning to one of the best designs in the Midwest. Whereas at one time the course would shine for the Western Amateur, Ron made it his goal to provide those tournament conditions for the paying membership throughout the season, and has done so with great success. Even though Point O'Woods is a wonderful club, like many others, it's not immune to a poor economy. With a membership split of about 50% local and 50% Chicagoans, the club relies equally on resident and non-resident members. Unfortunately, the economy in Michigan has resulted in the loss of 55 members. This has caused a large void in annual dues. Like many other clubs, they have resorted to drastic measures to cut costs and still provide a high quality experience. This meant operating without a stand-alone general manager – enter Ron.

Being the senior member of management staff, as well as having earned the trust of the club, Ron was asked to become GM, as well as Superintendent, in February of 2008. Feeling a responsibility not only to himself and his assistants, but to the club as a whole, Ron took on the challenge after conferring with other crossover superintendents at the 2008 GIS. Besides being the senior member of the management team, Ron also credits his tight budget management for his success at the club. He only went over budget once, when catastrophic weather hit the course and dropped 250 trees.


When looking at the club as a whole, Ron believes that Superintendents are the most qualified candidates to take on a leadership role, because they are accountable for any and all mistakes on the golf course. He says that we are, across the board, the best run department of the club. The management of a larger part of the club probably comes more naturally to us. Ron feels that as superintendents we have a better understanding of what is most important to the club in critical financial times. As great as all the restaurants and grills are at private clubs people don't say, "I'm going to join Point'O Woods because the dining room is so great." It's about the golf course. Making sure it remains in peak condition will be a key to getting the club back on firm footing for the future.

At this point in his career, dual roles are just fine for Ron, but he is quick to say that he will not be striving to become a General Manager at another club. His love is the golf course. He is also hesitant to get too involved in the Club Managers Association. He is reluctant to forsake education or trade shows directed at Golf Course Superintendents. That's because we are such a science based industry, with new products and services continually becoming available.

Rob Foster, Director of Golf and Park Maintenance, Lake Bluff Park District

Rob Foster recently took a higher level position in the Lake Bluff Park District. He was promoted from Golf Course Superintendent to Director of Golf and Park Maintenance during a recent merging of the two departments. While he doesn't

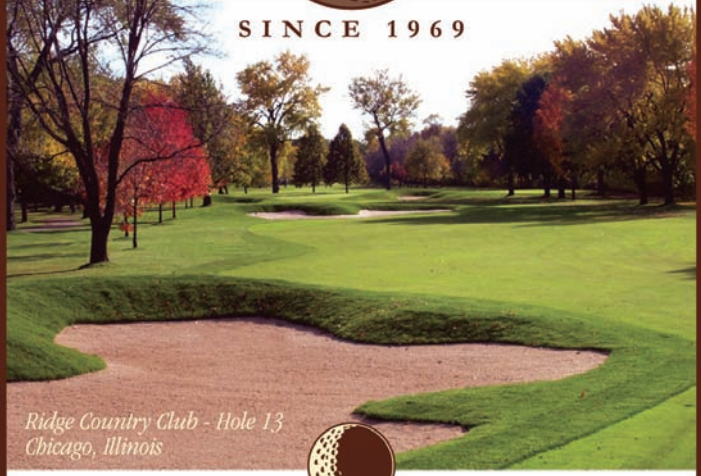
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have to worry about the food and beverage or clubhouse operations as someone at a private club would, he says the stress level has certainly increased. His need to delegate has increased as well. For this he relies on the two managers who work under him, one of whom is his old Assistant (Noah Mach), who was promoted to Golf Greens Manager.

The new position comes with new responsibilities, including snow removal, a public beach, seven baseball diamonds, and other activities such as party set-up/clean-up. It also comes with two budgets that must be maintained independently of each other, because the parks are tax payer funded and the golf course isn't. Thus far, Rob has been able to squeeze the additional responsibility into a normal work week, with the exception of a few meetings in the evenings.

When I asked Rob why he thought he was asked to take over the position he had a few different ideas. Rob already had a good working relationship with the Executive Director. He thinks he was seen as a leader who wasn't afraid to propose new solutions for today's challenges. He also thinks the promotion came from a combination of hard work, good timing, and a positive vision for the park district.

At this point Rob is looking forward to the new challenges. To prepare himself, he's going to attend classes to learn more about baseball fields and park maintenance. He isn't too concerned about the transition, because there are so many similarities between parks maintenance and golf maintenance. He is glad that the opportunity came along and has some opinions on why we, as (Assistant) Superintendents, are

becoming the go-to-guys for positions like this. He thinks that we tend to be better problem solvers and tend to have a straight forward attitude toward management. He also feels that his diverse work experiences have helped him move up the ladder. Rob has worked for private clubs, public clubs, municipalities, and management corporations. His eight years working for management companies has given him a business approach that the park district appreciates and fits the current economic times to a tee.

Is becoming a manager or director at your club going to be your dream job? There's only one way to find out. But how you make yourself the guy that gets asked is the key. For Dave the GM role wasn't the right fit. He feels he is more valuable on the course. The club views him as even more valuable because of the time he spent as GM. Ron took the position because he is part of the fabric of the club. They trusted him because of his previous record; he has a desire to be integral to the club's recovery from the recession. For Rob (who I feel got the best promotion because he doesn't have all of the clubhouse responsibilities), this is an opportunity to learn some new things, which will help get him away from the everyday grind on the golf course. All three of these gentlemen were more to their company than just the guy who grows grass, and they have been rewarded for it. In today's economy, proving your worth is going to become more and more important. If you can help with more than the golf course, then your employer will take notice. **-OC**



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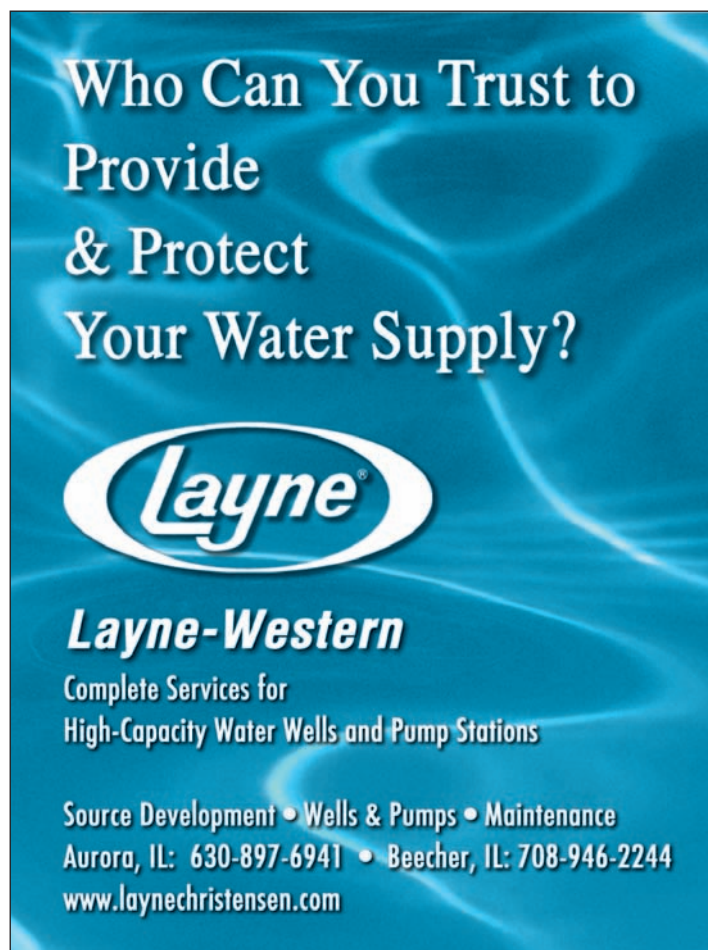
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Indian Hill Club

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