

Company puts surrounding open space to use

By Mark Leslie

If you're into computers and golf, and you happen to be in the vicinity of Sioux City, Iowa, you might want to pack your golf bag — er-r, 9 iron and putter — and visit the folks at Computer Support out on West Gordon Drive.

When Kenneth and Harry Keairns decided to build a new facility for their burgeoning company, the golfing brothers decided to build in some extras for themselves and their employees. You might call it "staying on a straight course for employee happiness," or "playing into the hands of your friends."

"We had to do some kind of landscaping anyhow," Ken Keairns said of the 6-1/2 acres surrounding the building. "Harry and I both like to golf, so we decided to build a few greens."

Shipping/Export Manager Dave Leonard added, "When it came time to decide about landscaping it just seemed logical to make better use of the ground than just plant grass and trees that only provide something to look at."

Indeed. Now employees, customers and friends can practice their short game on the four-hole course that, with a fifth tee area, allows the golfer to play twice around for nine holes.

Loess Hills Golf Club (so named "because



Computer Support's golf course beautifies its landscape.

no one has less hills than us," Leonard said) opened this spring and gets the most use during the lunch hour and directly after work.

Eight employees play regularly, Keairns said. "Every lunch period it's really well used. Others play after work. Harry sometimes brings his family down in the

evening," he said.

Keairns said a foursome can play the course in 45 minutes — an added plus for a busy schedule.

The course record? "Probably one over par," he said. "They're small, elevated greens. You've got to be deadly accurate. If you hit it up on the green, it's cause for celebration."

No one has knocked in a hole in one yet, but the company's golfers are putting in a stock of prizes for the lucky moment.

Leonard said that instead of costing area courses business, Loess Hills gives beginners "a good place to learn without fear, which really brings more golfers to the courses. Knowing a little about what they're doing, this should make other golfers happy since they're not being held up by a totally inexperienced beginner."

The par 3 holes play 85, 65, 115 and 60 yards. The 1st green doubles as the green for

the 115-yard 5th hole by playing from a separate tee box.

It was built by a group of amateurs on the site of a former drive-in, so its upkeep has been a challenge, according to Keairns and Leonard, who maintain it along with Randy Thomas of the shipping department. They have received a lot of expert help from local fertilizer supplier Anderson Distributing. The neighboring Dakota Dunes' golf course maintenance crew has helped with advice and even did some mowing before the Keairnses bought their own mowers.

Loess Hills' growing inventory of maintenance equipment now includes a three-gang reel mower, bought used for \$4,000; a used tractor to pull it, at a cost of \$700; turf tires for the tractor, costing \$400; a used walk-behind greens mower bought from Dakota Dunes for \$600; and an old drum-type aerator.

"Being on an old drive-in theater site, it was very hard," Leonard said, "so we had to get the aerator. We've aerated it twice now."

A 15-circuit sprinkler system waters the fairways and greens, while the roughs are not watered.

The greens boast Penncross bentgrass, the fairways are a blend of bluegrass and ryegrass, and light white silica sand fills the bunkers.

Ken Keairns, Leonard and Thomas share the maintenance duties, logging about 10 hours a week among them.

But the joy has been worth it. "I've knocked five strokes off my game," Keairns said.

What's next? "We've got another three acres on the other side of the building," Keairns said. "We're thinking of adding a couple more holes."

So, if the boss nixes the dental care health plan ... if he turns his back on eye care ... or says "no" to disability insurance. If pleas for all else fail, perhaps you can draw a card from the hand of Computer Support — and ask for just a little par-3 golf course.

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