



Schwarzenberger, Sand Creek and speedy kids

By MARK LESLIE

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho — What does a business administration degree-holder and hay-grain-sheep farmer have to do with a golf course? Everything, if you're Jim Schwarzenberger.



Jim Schwarzenberger checks a newly planted tree — one of many transplanted from Sand Creek's nursery to the kids' course. They provide a safety screen from the regulation course, in addition to aesthetics and ecology, he says.

Indeed, Schwarzenberger is just now ready to drop the moniker of "hay-grain-sheep farmer" after 17 years of doing double-duty as superintendent at the municipal Sand Creek Golf Course here. He's about to finally concentrate solely on golf.

Schwarzenberger's penultimate crowning achievement was construction of a five-hole kids' course that opened in June. His ultimate accomplishment will be when he earns status as a certified golf course superintendent. "I've begun the certification process," he said. "I'm 61 years old, and I want to go out on a high note when I retire."

Born and raised on a farm, Schwarzenberger earned a degree in busi-

5-hole junior course sets youths apart to learn game, etiquette

ness administration from Idaho State. His goal all along was to farm. Yet, little did he know, more than three decades ago, those farming genes were going to change his life and livelihood. When the city of Idaho Falls bought 450 acres of the farmland he leased and decided to build an 18-hole municipal golf course, he was hired to help build the track and grow it in.

That was 17 years ago, and Schwarzenberger has been superintendent ever since — first learning from the knowledgeable hand of then-Idaho Falls Golf Course Manager Chuck Deming, and then from hands-on experience.

Finding Schwarzenberger — two jobs and all — too comfortable maintaining Sand Creek, Deming approached him eight years ago.

"He said, 'I have an idea for you. You don't have enough to do,'" Schwarzenberger recalled. That idea was to build a short course for kids 9 years old and younger.

That course may remain unnamed (JC for now), but it is now the talk of the town among golfers.

"Our concern was that we were being inundated with young golfers," Schwarzenberger said. "We need these young golfers to feed into the pipeline as they mature and become adults. Whether they stay here or move away, it helps golf. If I can paraphrase: This is a small step for junior golf but a giant step for golf."

"This is our thought: to help young people appreciate all of the great things that can happen with golf in their lifetime and to learn etiquette."

The kids' course is a unique adjunct to the city's youth program, which includes 600 participants at the three municipal courses, Schwarzenberger said. Children are trained in etiquette, rules and play. Accompanied by nonplaying parents, they are then released to play the kids' course.

"We feel it's a seed well planted," he added.

The response among adult golfers has been wholeheartedly supportive. "Golfers really appreciate it," he said.

Other superintendents might say, "But we can't afford such a thing." Yet, a key nugget to the Sand Creek story

is, it cost exactly \$660. And it would have cost nothing had the planned opening date not forced their hand to get the last sprinkler heads in the ground.

When Deming advanced the idea eight years ago, the two men set out immediately to get the job done. Assigning to the project a 20- to 25-acre plot of land adjacent to the 10th hole, Deming designed the little course, with help from Schwarzenberger. Traditionally slow Wednesdays became the operative days to put the crew of two full-timers and six summertime employees to work on the project.

Whenever Idaho Falls' street and water departments would tear out old water lines and so forth, that material became main lines on the kids' course.

Townspersons joined in in other ways. City Councilman Wes Diest, for instance, "was an entrepreneur in putting money together from various civic groups and individuals," Schwarzenberger said.

Many golfers donated money. One set up an account for the project at an area plumbing supply company,

Parks and Recreation Department Director Dave Christiansen became a key player.

Now their jobs are done — and on any Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday you'll find these single-digit-aged youngsters swinging clubs here.

None of the holes on the kids' course are longer than 150 yards. It contains grass bunkers but no sand traps. But, he said, "All the functions of maintenance are identical on the little course and the regulation course, such as the height of cut of greens and tees, so we can use our equipment without making adjustments."

Indeed, it is not a flat, uninteresting course, but a challenging one. "You can look out from the first tee and say, 'Hey, I want to play this course.' It gives you that kind of feel," Schwarzenberger said.

But Schwarzenberger may be the only superintendent in the country who can't play his own course — the junior course at least... He's not young enough.

Neither can his eight children or wife Lucille — who all golf. But perhaps granddad will at least be able to walk alongside his 2-1/2-year-old granddaughter when she plays it — in a couple of years.

UMass readies Green School for professionals

AMHERST, Mass. — The University of Massachusetts Extension has announced particulars of a comprehensive Green School it will operate here on 13 days between Jan. 3 and March 21.

Established for green industry professionals, the program is designed to provide training in horticulture fundamentals and their relationship to environmental quality. It is intended to instill "a sense of environmental stewardship."

With integrated pest management as a foundation, the 60-hour curriculum focuses on management of the landscape as a whole.

Divided into 2-1/2 hour sessions, topics include basic botany and plant structure, wood ornamentals, basic plant pa-

thology, basic entomology, tree and shrub insect and disease problems, soil properties, pruning trees and shrubs, basic irrigation systems, perennial plant identification and culture, clues for landscape design, alternative plant materials, turf physiology and management, weed biology and management, horticultural calculations, turf construction and maintenance, turf insects and diseases, understanding and using pesticides responsibly, environmental issues and regulations, and power-tool safety and maintenance.

The \$350 fee includes resource materials. Deadline for registration is Dec. 1 and can be made by contacting Kathleen Carroll at 413-545-0895 or Mary Owen at 508-892-0382.

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