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LEND A HELPING HAND

As professionals in the golf course industry, it's our duty to help educate others about environmental management and the preservation of the environment. As a proud member of the class C assistant superintendents committee of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents, our chapter has supported us to become involved in our industry and community. With most of us having a turf/horticulture background, providing support for a landscape project was the best choice. We chose to work with Habitat for Humanity. HFH is an international organization that helps communities everywhere and has built more than 225,000 homes worldwide. Let me tell you a bit about our project that started in 2007 in Aurora, Ill.

Last year, the Fox Valley Illinois chapter of HFH set a goal to provide four homes to needy families, who have an opportunity to put sweat equity into their future. Each family helps build its future residence and establishes equity in its home once completed. The home isn't free, but it's a way to improve people's lives and provide a stable platform to continue building a better life.

Knowing a need existed in our community, the assistants committee of the MAGCS, volunteered to provide the labor and landscaping for a house that was to be built by the HFH chapter. I was privileged to serve as the project coordinator in charge of organizing the donation and installation of the plant material.

First on the to-do list was find a landscape architect to prepare the site's landscape design. It needed to be someone who was familiar with local growing conditions and plants hardy to the area. We engaged the entire Midwest chapter and solicited members' help and exper-

tise. Greg Martin of Martin Designs, Ltd., provided the landscape and planting plan for the project. Once Martin completed the design, it was time to locate the plant material. We spoke with the president of the MAGCS and our board of directors to come up with a solution that allowed multiple companies to donate sod and materials. We composed a letter that was sent to all the vendors in our local association. The letter also was posted on the association's Web site. Any member could sign up to donate plant material, time or money.



MAGCS members volunteered their time to help turn a house into a home.

The home building ran a few weeks later than expected, and by then, it was late November. We spoke with the building coordinator and discussed our options. We decided to sod the lot before winter settled in for good. The lot needed to be grassed before it would pass for an occupancy permit. We installed the rest of the plant material in the spring of 2008.

Duntemann Sod Farms, a local sod farm and member of the MAGCS, donated the sod. The lot required about 9,000 square feet of sod. Luckily, the snow held off long enough for the sod to be cut and delivered to the home. In typical Mid-

western fashion, the weather changed quickly. The temperature dropped 15 degrees, from 45 to 30, and snow began to fall at a rate of one-half inch per hour within two hours of our arrival. Ten association members spent six hours finishing grading the lot and installing the sod. Shortly after we began working, we were joined by the family that would soon live in the house. Throughout the home building, they had helped, and this day was no different. Together, we laid the sod before the ground froze.

The winter of 2007/2008 in the Chicagoland area was cold and long. When the weather broke this spring, we called the volunteers and companies to help out once more. The landscape plan called for various shrubs, groundcover, trees and flowers. We worked with the family to complete the landscape. The final step included smoothing the sod, adding mulch to the landscape beds and applying fertilizer.

As a volunteer, the joy I received from helping others was immeasurable. Working with soil, growing grass and maintaining turf are my passions. To be able to use this knowledge and the resources available to me is a small way to help others in my community. A little time and a lot of generosity from a bunch of dedicated people made it possible to turn dirt into a yard and a house into a home. I thank the volunteers who offered their help with this project. This philanthropic effort couldn't have been completed without the support of the MAGCS. Last, but certainly not least, I thank the vendors who provided the plant materials. Because of these fine folks and all of the volunteers, the project was a success.

The golf course maintenance profession has a great story to tell the public. HFH is one of many fine organizations to get involved with to help make our profession and our society a better place. **GCI**